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SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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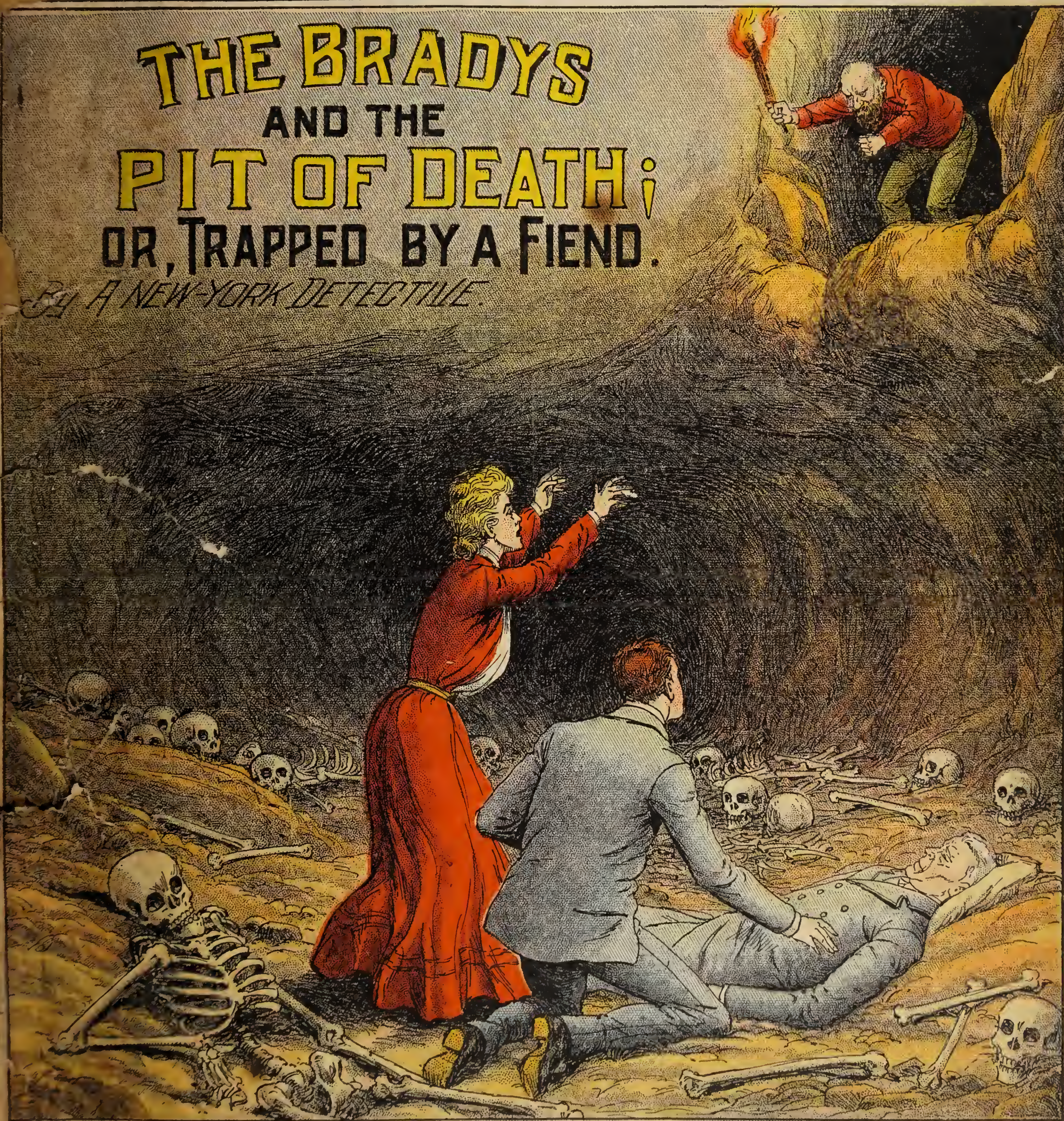
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THE BRADYS AND THE PIT OF DEATH; OR, TRAPPED BY A FIEND.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



"Death! Death! Death!" shouted the fiend as he waved his torch above the Bradys. Those are your future friends! They lie all about you! Learn to know them! They were all good fellows once! You are in the pit of Death!"

"Then you have gained a point in your Stevenson case through me?"

"Yes. Dr. Fortescue."

"You will undertake to solve this mystery at the request of the King?"

"Yes, we will."

"I am more than pleased to hear you say so. I know how difficult some find it to secure the services of the Bradys. I shall cable his Majesty at once."

"And when you do say this, that during the past year there have been a number of mysterious disappearances in New York, the subject in each instance being some moneyed foreigner, whose money seems to have invariably been kept intact."

"Is that a fact?"

"It is, Mr. Walsh. These cases have puzzled the police not a little, but we have had nothing to do with any of them until it came to the Stevenson case."

"I sincerely hope this clew of the doctor will help you out."

"It may prove so. Now if you have a list of the persons to whom Mr. Yardley carried letters of introduction I should like to have it."

"Unfortunately I have no such list, but I can name several."

The persons named were among the most prominent in New York.

That any of them could have been connected with Yardley's disappearance seemed highly improbable, nevertheless Old King Brady noted the names down.

The Bradys then left the consul's, and returning to their office Old King Brady replied to the letter of the consul, despatching Harry to 8—th street to have an interview with Dr. Fortescue.

Old King Brady, in the meantime, hurried to Wall Street, where, after some difficulty, he succeeded in obtaining an interview with Mr. Thos. Tuckerman, agent for the banking house of Tuckerman Bros. & Co.

Tuckerman proved to be a stiff, cold Englishman of an uninviting appearance.

He informed Old King Brady that he had only seen Yardley once, and that was on the day after his death. Most of the money he called at the bank to draw money.

He confirmed Consul Walsh's statement that Yardley had done you money, saying that the deposit had been made in a London house by the attorneys of the Earl of...

...me in the house from the New York house. It is early yet. Tuckerman drew one of us goes out and tries it, and none to give; we had better stick together."

"Death!" they were silent. ...seemed to be something singular, ...place. ...had repeat-

edly tried to gain an interview with Mr. Tuckerman, but in every instance had failed to get beyond the clerks.

Old King Brady now returned to the office, where after a short wait Harry came in.

"Well, I've been up there and I am back again," he said, "and what's more I've got a surprise for you. There is no such person as Dr. Fortescue. The man has been dead for ten years."

CHAPTER II.

SOMETHING HITS HARRY.

Instead of replying to his partner's announcement, Old King Brady leaned back in his chair and lighted a cigar.

"You don't seem a bit surprised, Governor," Harry said.

"I am not."

"And why?"

"Because since you left I have been talking with the police inspector over the phone. He told me that Dr. Fortescue was dead."

"You might have done that in the first place and saved me the journey."

"No. I wanted you to go up there. I wanted to have a direct report in any case. You found an old, abandoned house?"

"Yes. Old mansion in a garden, all dropping to pieces. It is filled with Italians at the present time."

"So the police told me. But it formerly was the residence of a Dr. Fortescue?"

"Yes; so I ascertained."

"Did you find out who owned the property now?"

"I was told that it belonged to the doctor's estate, which had never been settled."

"Did you get the agent's name?"

"The real estate agent who has the renting of it is a man named Wilson. I called on him, but he declined to tell me who he represented. I've made rather a failure of it all, I'm afraid."

"By no means, Harry. You have done just as you were told. These details can be learned later."

"Did you find out what the police thought of Dr. Fortescue calling on the consul?"

"They thought that someone had attempted to impose on him, thinking that they might get a reward."

"Absurd!"

"As the consul puts it—yes. The fact is, he offered no reward, and the police detectives were lukewarm in the matter. The work they did was of the most superficial description, and was dropped at once."

"I see. Have you figured out any plan of action?"

"Yes, I have. We have at last found a point of beginning in the matter of these disappearances. Both Stevenson and Yardley left their hotels for the purpose of talking ranch. It is safe to say that both went to the same

place with the intention of meeting this mythical doctor. Probably others have done the same thing if there have been other disappearances through this man, or this gang, as the police believe. Now, my plan is for you to play the young foreigner and turn up at that house at eight o'clock in the evening, which I have learned by telephoning the hotel clerk at the St. Denis was the hour of Yardley's appointment."

"I catch on. A good idea."

"It may lead to nothing, but it is worth trying."

"It certainly is."

The detectives conversed further, and completed their arrangements.

Just before eight o'clock they turned up on West 8—th street on the block where the old mansion stood.

Harry's get-up was decidedly English.

As for Old King Brady, he wore the quaint costume which has become so famous.

This is an old blue coat with its double row of brass buttons down the front; an ancient stock about the stand-up collar, and a big white hat with its broad brim.

The detectives were not seen together by anyone in the neighborhood.

On the contrary they approached the house from different directions.

Needless to say, Old King Brady kept on the opposite side of the street.

From this point he sized up the house.

It was one of the few old colonial mansions which still remain standing in that rapidly developing section of New York.

Built of wood, it occupied the center of a plot of ground about a hundred feet square, which had once been the garden, but was now filled with rag-carts, tumble-down sheds, and odds and ends of junk which show the occupation of the Italian tenants of the place.

As for the house itself, it was all lighted up and seemed to be swarming with tenants.

The place, in short, was a blot on the neighborhood.

Yet the property represented great value, and it seemed incredible that its owners could allow it to lie idle, eating up with taxes.

Old King Brady saw Harry enter the open gateway and then strolled on down the block.

He had perfect confidence in his partner's ability to take care of himself and not let the Italians get the better of him.

At the corner he stood waiting and watching the gate.

It was but a moment before Harry came out again.

With him was a tall Italian, who pointed down the street and talked with many gestures.

Harry seemed to thank him. Then, putting money in the man's hand, he hurried away.

Old King Brady turned the corner, but still watched the house.

The Italian continued to watch Harry until he also had turned the corner.

He then retreated through the gate, and was seen to re-enter the house.

"Well?" said Old King Brady, as Harry joined him.

"I knocked on the door and asked for Dr. Fortescue," said Harry. "The instant I pronounced the name the man you saw popped out of the room on the right.

" 'You comma see doctaire?' he asked.

" 'Yes,' said I. 'Does he live here?'

" 'No liva here. He next block, same number,' then he went on to tell me how to find the house, but I noticed he spoke very low, and kept trying to draw me away from the door and out on the street."

"Yes, I noticed that myself."

"Another thing he said, Governor."

"What was that?"

" 'You tella doctor I show you way.' "

"Ah, ha! This doctor appears not to be quite such a dead one as the police believe."

"He is not dead to that Italian, at all events."

The next block proved to be quite a different proposition.

Here there were expensive flats, and one row of five old-fashioned four-story brownstone houses which had evidently been built by some pioneer in the neighborhood.

The numbering was the same as on the other street.

The number which the old mansion carried was here attached to one of these brownstone houses.

As the Bradys surveyed it from the opposite side of the street they noticed at once its deserted air.

No light burned within. The basement and parlor windows were concealed behind blinds.

These were plastered over with mud, while a story was chalked with hideous characters and pithy remarks about certain persons to the detectives unknown.

A dead cat lay at the foot of the steps which led to area gate.

These and other things seen by the detectives when crossed the street led them to believe that this house be tenantless, and yet there was no bill on it either "Let" or "For Sale."

"If Yardley had the same experience as you did then this is the place he was directed to," remarked King Brady. "I think we must try and get house."

"It may not be so easy."

"We shall soon know; follow me."

It was a cold, windy night, and there was seen on the block excepting a woman with a shawl, who went hurrying past.

The Bradys went about.

They ascended to try the door.

It was faster trials of his skill they shut their

"Don't you

"There may be

"No; if there is such a person I propose to come upon him suddenly. I expect to meet no one, however. Here goes for the other door."

This was as readily opened as the outer door had been.

The Bradys had brought their electric dark lanterns into play, so they had light enough.

"The house is furnished, at all events," remarked Old King Brady, looking around.

He threw open the parlor door.

The room was crowded with expensive furniture of rather antique pattern.

"It's a wonder burglars don't tackle this place if it is left shut up in this fashion all the time," remarked Harry.

"They may fear it. The house may bear a bad name."

"That is easily learned."

"Certainly; but now to prove if there is anybody in the house."

The Bradys went from room to room.

Behind the parlor was a sort of library, fairly well furnished.

Back of that in an extension was a room fitted up like a chemist's laboratory.

There was some apparatus here of more or less value, but as in the other rooms dust was deep upon everything.

It needed no expert to see that the rooms had not been occupied in a long time.

Down in the basement the rooms were unfurnished, and it was the same on the upper floors, with the exception of one hall bedroom, where there was a cheap chamber set.

The bed was tumbled up, and looked as if it might have recently been slept in.

And this was the extent of the detectives' discoveries.

The Bradys now returned to the library, and sat down to consult.

"What do you make out of it, Governor?" Harry asked.

"I make a man-trap out of it," was the reply. "Anyone entering these rooms would have no suspicion that the house was unfurnished above and below."

"It strikes me. A newly arrived foreigner, especially, would be most liable to be deceived."

"That's so. This laboratory is the peculiar part of it, Governor."

"Good chance there to do a fellow up by poison."

"Most of the bottles on the shelves are empty, I take it."

"What do you propose to do?"

"I'm thinking whether it would pay us to watch here."

"It seems to me it would pay us best to find out something about the house from the neighbors, first."

"That might be done. It is early yet."

"If one of us goes out and tries it, the other can stay here."

"I think we had better stick together."

"Dead!" they were silent.

The silence seemed to be something singularly oppressive in the place.

Old King Brady got up and began to examine the few books which filled a small set of shelves.

"These are all French and German," he remarked.

"Hadn't we better open every drawer and closet?" asked Harry.

"I think we had," was the reply. "It may lead to something."

They set about it.

There were several pieces of furniture with drawers in the parlor, and they tackled those first.

But none of the drawers were locked, nor did they contain anything.

"You finish up here, Governor, and I'll tackle the laboratory," said Harry. "There are lots of drawers in that big bench there."

"All right," replied the old detective. "Go ahead."

Harry passed into the extension, and Old King Brady could hear him bustling about.

All at once came the sound of a heavy fall.

There was no cry accompanying it.

"Harry!" shouted the old detective, starting for the laboratory on the run.

Reaching the door, he saw to his horror that Harry was lying stretched upon his back on the floor.

His face was deathly white, and his eyes closed.

A faint odor as of bitter almonds pervaded the room.

"Prussic acid!" gasped Old King Brady. "Great heavens! The boy is dead!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUNG KING BRADY.

Old King Brady's own head was beginning to swim, and he was gasping for breath.

An expert in the action of poisons, the old detective having caught the clew by the almond odor knew what that meant.

Prussic acid will kill if simply inhaled.

Death is produced by a powerful action on the heart, which causes suffocation.

One drop of the stuff on the tongue will cause instant death.

Old King Brady's first act was to drag Harry from the room into the library.

"He breathes!" he muttered, bending over him. "It can only be a case of inhalation. He is not dead!"

He sprang back into the library, threw up one of the windows which was fastened by an ordinary catch, and a grateful breeze swept through the room.

Old King Brady's eyes were everywhere with one sweep.

He could see no bottle on the bench itself, although there were many empty ones on the shelves behind it.

One of these might, of course, have contained the fatal drug.

Enough of the odor could have easily remained in the bottle to produce its effect on Harry.

But would he have had time to replace the bottle on the shelves?

Old King Brady thought not.

He quickly returned to his partner.

Harry's condition remained unchanged.

He was breathing heavily, but was quite unconscious.

It was clearly a case for a doctor if Old King Brady expected to save his partner's life.

"I shall have to leave him here and get help," he thought.

All he could do was to lift Harry on to the leather-covered lounge.

He then rushed out of the house and flew down the block to a house where he had seen a doctor's sign.

His brain was all in a whirl, and his heart sank as he pulled the bell.

"Is Dr. Ingolf in?" he demanded.

"He is, sir," replied the girl.

"I must see him at once. It is a case of life and death."

Evidently the doctor heard, for at that moment a man in a dressing gown stepped into the hall.

"What is the trouble?" he asked.

"A young man has probably inhaled prussic acid. He is gasping for life. Can you come at once?"

"Yes. He can't have inhaled very much of it, or he would be dead now. You are probably making a mistake."

"No mistake, doctor! For heaven sake, don't delay!"

"Not an instant," replied the doctor.

He made a dive through a door, and in less than two minutes came out with hat and coat on, and his medicine case in his hand.

"You are Old King Brady, the detective, are you not?" he asked.

"I am."

"I thought so. Have we far to go?"

"Only a step."

They were in the street then and both went up the block on the run.

"Who is the young man?" demanded the doctor.

"My partner."

"Ah! I have read of him. Is this the house?"

"Yes! Quick! Quick!"

Old King Brady threw back the door.

Out came his dark lantern, and he hurried Dr. Ingolf into the library.

There was no one on the sofa.

Harry had disappeared.

Old King Brady almost fainted.

"This is a trap! Those scoundrels have spirited the boy away!"

"How long since you left here?"

"Just long enough to run to your house and return."

"It seems incredible that they could move him so quick."

"It has been done, however."

"May you not have been deceived in the whole business? Is it not possible that he recovered in your absence, and finding himself alone, went out to look for you?"

"Possible, yes; but I don't believe it."

The doctor peered about curiously.

"I suppose you know that this house bears a bad reputation," he remarked.

"I do not," replied Old King Brady. "But I can readily believe it. Help me search here, Dr. Ingolf. The boy must still be in this house."

The search which followed was thorough.

It revealed nothing, however.

Old King Brady had now outwardly regained his usual calmness, although inwardly he was sick with fear on Harry's account.

"Let us sit down here in the library and talk this matter over calmly," he said. "I am an old man, doctor. This shock is telling on me."

They passed to the library.

"Tell me about the reputation of this house?" asked the old detective, as he dropped into a chair.

"All I know about it is what the neighbors say," the doctor replied.

"And what do the neighbors say?"

"That there was a man murdered here and the place has not been occupied since. Of course, in addition there are the usual yarns about his ghost haunting the place."

"Who was the victim?"

"It was never known. Screams were heard here one night, and the police broke in to find a man stabbed to the heart dead on the floor."

"And the remains were never identified?"

"No. The body was buried in Potter's Field. The man appeared to be a foreigner. There was nothing found upon him by which he could be identified."

"Who occupied the house then?"

"It was rented to a man named Goater, a mysterious sort of person, who came and went at odd times. He lived here quite alone, I am told."

"And what became of this Goater?"

"He never was seen afterward."

"Why does the house remain as it is? There is valuable furniture here. Who owns it all?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I never was in here before. It surprises me to find this laboratory here. The murder happened just before I came into the neighborhood. Surely you ought to remember it. You are interested in such things."

"That is true; just the same I can't be expected to follow up every murder. I don't recall this one. No doubt I shall find it on my file. But tell me who lives next door?"

"On the west a Mrs. Cameron; a respectable widow, who keeps a boarding-house. On the east a noted character, Dr. Welford."

"I saw no doctor's sign."

"Oh, dear, no! He don't practice. I mean Welford on the heart."

"Let me understand you. Do you mean that this Wel-ford has written a treatise on the heart?"

"Several. He is the standard authority on that subject."

"You know him?"

"I have a slight acquaintance with him. He is a very retiring man."

"A person of family?"

"I believe not. I know very little of his private affairs."

Old King Brady sat silent for some moments.

"Harry has been captured by these people at the very start," he said to himself. "Hasty action on my part will do no good. Just the same I depend a lot upon the boy himself. If he still lives his ready wits may save him."

"This is a very mysterious business, doctor," he said aloud. "I suppose you will think it necessary to report the matter to the police?"

"I shall, Mr. Brady. I don't care to get into trouble."

"In a way I represent the police. If you will keep your own counsel I can guarantee you against trouble."

"I am curious to know what brought you and your partner into this house in the first place. If you can confide in me to that extent perhaps I could be induced to hold my tongue."

"Just so. If you will pledge yourself to secrecy I will tell you."

"I pledge you my professional honor, Mr. Brady."

"It is enough. Now tell me more about this house. It has remained in its present condition ever since that murder?"

"So I understand."

Old King Brady then went on to tell of the disappearances of Stevenson and Yardley.

He made no mention of the details of his own work, merely stating that certain clues had led him to the house.

"This appears to be a very serious matter," said Dr. Ingolf. "Now tell me why you were so sure that prussic acid figured in the case?"

Old King Brady gave his reasons.

"You display a certain chemical knowledge which carries weight," said the doctor. "Let us see if we can find prussic acid here."

"One moment. I have always understood that it was almost as dangerous to inhale prussic acid as to take it internally."

"It is so."

"But that if inhaled in crystalline form it is not certain death."

"That is correct. The inhalation of the crystalized acid would produce much the same condition which you describe your partner to have been in."

Dr. Ingolf now opened his little case, and produced a glass mask, which he fitted to his face.

He then entered the laboratory, and began taking down the bottles.

The only light he had to aid him in his work was Old King Brady's little dark lantern.

The old detective had previously tried to light the gas, but found that it was not turned on in the house.

The doctor ran over the bottles very rapidly, Old King Brady standing in the doorway watching him.

Apparently he made no discovery, for he next tackled the drawers beneath the bench.

As he opened the third drawer the pungent odor of bitter almonds was very distinct.

The doctor shut the drawer with all haste, and returning to the library, took off his mask.

"The crystalized acid is in that drawer," he said. "No wonder your partner fell down."

"Is there much?" asked the old detective.

"Yes; the drawer is half full of the stuff."

"It can only have been put there as a trap."

"So it would seem."

"Would anybody opening that drawer be affected the same way?"

"There isn't one man in a thousand with a heart strong enough to stand up against it. But don't be alarmed, Mr. Brady, the momentary inhalation of those crystals will not produce death in cases where the heart is normal."

Again Old King Brady was silent for some moments.

"Well, doctor!" he said, rising at last. "I don't think it is necessary to detain you any longer. What is your charge?"

"Nothing at all. If I can be of any further service to you——"

"I don't know that you can just at present."

"May I ask what you propose to do?"

"I have not determined."

"Mr. Brady, I have my share of curiosity. How do you suppose your partner was spirited away? You have had a lot of experience in such matters, and——"

"And ought to be able to arrive at some conclusion. On the face of it that seems so; and yet I have arrived at no conclusion as yet."

"Very well," said Dr. Ingolf, feeling that he had been dismissed. "I merely ask do you intend remaining in this house?"

"No. I am going to the police station," he said. "I must tell them of my partner's disappearance, of course, but I desire to do it in my own way."

"Oh, that's all right," said the doctor. "I don't blame you a bit. The police are stupid enough, heaven knows. Of course, you don't want them interfering with your case."

They left the house together.

"I've sealed your lips for to-night at least, my friend," thought the old detective. "Just the same, this thing will be all over the neighborhood in the morning."

He had no confidence in Dr. Ingolf's promise of secrecy. Parting with the doctor, the old detective started ostensibly for Amsterdam avenue.

His intentions, however, were far different.

In a moment he would have turned and retraced his steps toward the house of mystery if he had not run into

a young burglar of his acquaintance, who was hanging around the corner saloon.

Old King Brady's sharp eyes rested upon the fellow from afar, and a moment later his hand was on his shoulder.

"Ricketts, how-de-do!" he said, in a low tone.

The burglar gave a desperate start, and pulled away.

"Dat hain't my name!" he gasped.

Then, recognizing the old detective, he seemed to also recognize that denial of his identity was useless.

"Gee! It's Old King Brady!" he gasped. "Say, what-cher want me?"

CHAPTER IV.

SEEKING A CLEW.

"Come with me, Billy," whispered Old King Brady. "I am not going to arrest you, man! I merely want your help."

"Oh, all right, den. You kin git dat, Mr. Brady," was the reply.

Ricketts looked relieved.

He had been twice arrested by the old detective, but at the same time he had received several favors at his hands, the principal one being a shortening of his first sentence in Sing Sing from five years to two.

The second arrest had been a mistake, and where another detective would not have admitted this, but would have railroaded Ricketts up the river, Old King Brady saw to it that the fellow was promptly set free.

Thus Ricketts felt as much gratitude and friendliness toward the old detective as a man of his class is capable of feeling.

Old King Brady's next words did the rest.

"I want your help, Ricketts, and I'll pay you well for it," he said, as they walked up the avenue, curiously followed by the eyes of the bums about the saloon.

"Sure, you get it, Mr. Brady," replied Billy. "Spit out de facts. What's up?"

"You know Harry?"

"Sure."

"Well, he has got himself in trouble. I need help. I don't want to let the police in on my case, and I don't care to call another detective. I happened to see you as I was passing, and it occurred to me that you would just fill the bill."

"I'll help you in any way I can, boss. You've been good to me."

"That's all right then, and you will lose nothing by so doing. Come with me."

Old King Brady did not return directly to the mysterious house, but led the way around the block, returning to it from the other side.

"There is where we are going," he said to Billy Ricketts, pointing out the house as they approached.

"Oh, chee! I can't go in dere!" gasped Billy, pulling back.

"What's the matter now? It's in that house that my business lies."

"But the ghost!"

"That house is supposed to be haunted?"

"Sure, Mr. B. Dere hain't a crook in dis town what would pull off a job in dere. An' say, dere's good stuff inside all de same."

"I know. I've been in there. I'll protect you from the ghost."

Billy Ricketts had further objections to offer, but when Old King Brady named the amount which he proposed to give for his assistance he finally consented to go on.

Watching their chance, they passed into the house unobserved.

Nothing had been disturbed since the old detective left.

Giving Billy a cigar, Old King Brady briefly told about Harry's disappearance.

"It don't concern you what brought us here in the first place," he said. "Never mind about that, Billy. Now, I want you to tell me why burglars fear this house?"

Billy's reply was to the point.

"I know at least tree who tried it; dey never turned up agin."

"You mean to say they disappeared in here?"

"Yep."

"Do you actually know this to be a fact?"

As it turned out the burglar did not certainly know. He was only repeating the legends of his craft.

But he had other information to give.

"I've watched de crib myself," he said. "I seen lights movin' about here at midnight. Odders have seen 'em, too."

"And the ghost?"

"Well, what about it?"

"What do people say it looks like?"

"Sure, it's a man, a furriner what was stabbed in here tree or fours years ago."

Old King Brady then got the same story he had heard from the doctor, told in Billy Ricketts' way.

It was now clear that all Billy had to supply was neighborhood gossip, but it was something to have Dr. Ingolf's statements confirmed.

By this time it was nearly ten o'clock.

"Billy, I'm going to call on the man next door," said Old King Brady. "What do you know of him?"

Billy had nothing to communicate concerning Dr. Welford.

It was the same with Mrs. Corcoran, the boarding-house keeper on the other side.

It required some further persuasion to induce the burglar to remain alone in the house.

Old King Brady had to "raise the ante," and throw in various complimentary remarks on Billy's courage.

"One thing is certain, he'll fight like a tiger if anyone

attempt to interfere with him," thought Old King Brady, as he left the house.

He ascended the steps of the house next door.

He pulled the bell.

In a moment his ring was answered by a fierce-looking man with shaggy black hair and an immense black mustache.

He was evidently a foreigner of some sort, though of just what breed Old King Brady could only guess.

"I wish to see Dr. Welford," said the old detective, presenting his card.

"De doctaire is mooch engage. I tink he no see you," replied the man.

"You will kindly give him my card, and say that my business is very important."

A dollar accompanied the request.

It had the desired effect.

Old King Brady was shown into a handsomely furnished reception room.

So far everything seemed to indicate that Dr. Welford was a man of wealth.

After a brief wait the man returned with word that Dr. Welford would be down presently.

"And what am I going to say to this man when he comes?" Old King Brady asked himself.

He had thought of no plan.

As he often does, Old King Brady's intention was to be guided on the impulse of the moment.

"I'll question him about the mystery of the house next door, and the ownership of the property," he determined as he caught the sound of footsteps in the hall.

Enter Dr. Welford!

Old King Brady saw a tall, slim man, with an expressionless face, little piercing black eyes, and a shiny bald head.

There was something familiar about the face, and yet as the old detective rose to greet the doctor he could not recall who he resembled.

There was no time to think about it.

"You wished to see me?" demanded Dr. Welford, raising a pair of gold-rimmed eye-glasses and pretending to study the card. "Mr.—Mr. Brady!"

"Yes, doctor, I wished to have a word with you. I represent the police department," Old King Brady replied.

An awkward pause followed.

"Well, sir, and why don't you speak?" demanded Dr. Welford, insolently. "My time is of some value to me."

"Same in my case," replied Old King Brady, who had been studying his man. "I have a few questions to ask you concerning the house next door."

Dr. Welford immediately sat down.

His whole manner changed.

Evidently he was really near-sighted, for looking at the card again he said:

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I see I have made a mistake. You are the celebrated detective, Old King Brady."

"I am Old King Brady—yes."

"Happy to meet you, sir. I have often heard of you and your work. That house next door is something of a mystery. I can't imagine what makes the owner leave it in its present condition. It is not only causing talk, but it must seriously damage his property."

"There seem to be many strange rumors told about it. The police are anxious to know more about it. Excuse my calling at so late an hour, doctor, but——"

"No excuse is necessary, sir. Now what is it you wish to know?"

"Who owns that house?"

"A man named Dadmore, living at Carlstadt, New Jersey. I can give you his address."

"Does he own this house also?"

"He owns the whole row."

"Does he own the old mansion in the rear, now occupied by Italians?"

The doctor's eyes fixed themselves upon Old King Brady.

It seemed as if the man was trying to look into his inmost thoughts.

"I understand that he does," was the reply. "Personally I have no acquaintance with him, although I have met him. My dealings are with Wilson, the real estate man on Amsterdam avenue."

"Thank you, doctor. Will you kindly give me Mr. Dadmore's address?"

"You intend to call on him?"

"Yes."

"I would prefer you did not mention my name. Dadmore is a peculiar person. I should not care to have him think that I was trying to interfere with his business."

"Your wishes shall be respected. In what way is he peculiar?"

"Oh, he is a crusty old bachelor. Decidedly an arbitrary character, as you will find."

"And now, doctor, about the stories connected with this house."

"Do you refer to the murder?"

"Yes."

"It is true that a man was murdered in there. One Goater was the tenant then. The police must have a record of all that."

"They have; but I was anxious to hear what you have to say about it."

"Well, I have nothing to say about it, for the excellent reason that I know nothing about it. I am a busy man, Mr. Brady. I am devoted exclusively to my literary work, and find little time to look into the affairs of my neighbors."

"Just so. And now about these rumors concerning the place being haunted. Have you ever seen or heard anything suspicious since the house became vacant?"

"I can't say that I have. Sounds are heard in there once in a while. Indeed, I heard them to-night. It seemed to me that there were people walking about in there, but I daresay it was only the rats."

"Thanks. I believe that is all I have to say. I shall make it my business to see Mr. Dadmore. I thank you again for the address."

Old King Brady then withdrew.

He had accomplished his purpose.

"Peculiar character on one side, all right," he said to himself. "Now let us see who is on the other side, if it is not too late. Where have I seen that man's face before?"

But cudgel his brains as he would, Old King Brady could not place Dr. Welford.

Old King Brady now called at the Corcoran house, taking his chances of being turned down on account of the lateness of the hour.

He found Mrs. Corcoran accessible, however.

She proved to be a plain, common-sensed woman.

She told Old King Brady that sounds were heard in the vacant house at night from time to time, and she claimed that the condition of the property was a detriment to her business.

She had never heard of Dadmore, and did not know who owned the property; her dealings had been entirely with the agent.

Old King Brady cut his interview short, for Mrs. Corcoran was as commonplace as Dr. Welford was peculiar.

Of course, before closing the interview, he questioned the woman about Dr. Welford.

She claimed to know very little about him, but Old King Brady learned several facts about the man.

He was supposed to be a bachelor.

He lived alone in the house, with one man servant, the foreigner who opened the door.

At times he had visitors—always men.

These visitors generally came on foot, early in the evening, with the doctor himself.

Occasionally cabs came to the house at a late hour.

On two or three occasions Mrs. Corcoran had seen the doctor go away in a cab at a late hour, accompanied by a young man.

Whether this young man was always the same person or not, Mrs. Corcoran could not say.

Having finished up his work on the outside, Old King Brady, after pretending to leave the neighborhood, returned and quietly slipped back into the deserted house.

CHAPTER V.

OLD KING BRADY KNOCKED OUT.

"I wonder how my burglar is getting along?" thought Old King Brady, as he fitted the key to the door.

He found Billy Ricketts right behind the inner door when he opened it.

"Go-h, I'm glad you've come. Mr. B.," said the burglar, as Old King Brady stepped into the hall.

"Anything?" asked the old detective.

"Not a blame ting. It's terrible lonely, dough. On'y for yer lantern I'd er died of ther horrors. How much longer do you want me to stop here?"

"I can't say," replied the old detective. "There is work to be done yet."

"Did yer ketch on about yer pardner?"

"Not yet. I've been interviewing the neighbors."

"I knowed dat. I seen yer troo de front blinds. Anyting doin'?"

"Billy, I suspect the man on this side of being mixed up in Harry's disappearance."

"I know de old geezer. I seen him many a time. You tink dere's some secret door leading into de next house?"

"It seems a very unlikely proposition, but at the same time that is what is in my mind."

"I tought de same ting meself, an' I've been havin' a look along de wall on me own account. I s'pose you done dat, too?"

"I have."

"Twig anyting?"

"No; but then my search was a very hasty one. How about you?"

"Well, it seems to me dat dere might be a way in troo dis drug store."

"You mean the laboratory? Of course you were careful not to open that drawer where the poison is."

"Was I? Well, you bet. I don't take no chances. What you told me was enough. But come on, Mr. B., and I'll show you what I mean."

Billy led the way to the laboratory.

"It's de bench, dat's what it is," said Billy. "You see it's on rollers."

"I see now, but I didn't before. It is set on glass balls."

"Dat's what it is. It can be moved out. I tried it. You see de back is wood, but behind dat wood dere's iron. What's dat fer if it isn't a door leading into de odder house."

"Out with it, Billy. We'll soon know!" cried Old King Brady.

Billy caught hold of the big laboratory bench and trundled it away from the wall.

Sure enough, behind it was a plate of iron or steel.

It stood about four feet high and was three in width.

It had been completely concealed by the wooden back of the bench.

All of us, even the wisest, do foolish things at times.

Old King Brady did the fool thing of his life when he advanced to this iron plate and sounded it with his bare knuckles.

Billy Ricketts heard a groan, and saw the old detective fall back on the floor as if dead.

The shock of the old detective's fall was a heavy one, but the shock to Billy's nerves was greater.

"De blame ting is charged with 'lectricity!" he gasped. "It's killed old man Brady sure's fate! Oh, dear!"

Billy made for the door.

We refer to the front door, of course; he had no notion of trying his hand on that terrible iron plate.

"If I'm ketched here dey'll say I killed him, and it means de chair fer sure," he thought.

He had no other idea than to escape.

This, however, was not to be.

He had scarcely opened the outer door when two officers pounced upon him.

Old King Brady's comings and goings at the mysterious house had been observed from the other side of the street.

Of course, it looked like burglars.

The police had been called up on the phone, and this was the result.

The next Old King Brady knew he came back to life in the Roosevelt Hospital.

He was weak beyond all telling, and it was two days before the doctors would allow him to talk.

Meanwhile the papers had been full of the old detective's mishap, and from a common burglar Billy Ricketts had become quite a character.

Of course, he told the whole story, and had the satisfaction of seeing his picture in all the journals.

His story was believed by the police, because Dr. Ingolf was summoned to the old detective's aid and he corroborated it.

As for the rest, a conversation which took place between Old King Brady and Inspector Conright at the hospital will explain.

It was just at dusk when the inspector called.

"How are you feeling to-night, Mr. Brady?" he asked, seating himself beside the bed.

"Much better," was the reply. "So much better that the doctors have consented to let me talk. That is why I sent for you."

The inspector made the usual encouraging remarks.

"Has anything been heard of Harry?" Old King Brady then asked.

"Not a thing, I am sorry to say," replied Conright. "We have done all in our power, Brady, since you sent that letter."

Old King Brady was silent for some minutes.

"I wouldn't bother my head about it now," said the inspector. "You two always seem to land on your feet like cats. It may all come right yet."

"I expect it to. Just the same it is serious. You have not done anything with that poor fellow?"

"You mean Ricketts?"

"Yes"

"We have him in the House of Detention."

"I am sorry he has been even put to that trouble. His presence there that night was solely due to me."

"Oh, we understand that. We felt that he might be needed as a witness against Dr. Welford."

"You are interesting me. The doctors here would not allow me to talk until to-day. I sent for you to post me. I want to know how matters stand. Just what happened after I fell down under that shock."

Inspector Conright explained about the capture of Ricketts, and the finding of Old King Brady unconscious.

"After we got through with Dr. Ingolf we got an ambulance and brought you here," he said. "Then we sent for a lineman to look into that plate."

"Well?"

"It wasn't charged then."

"Did it prove to be a secret door opening into the next house?"

"Brady, it did. We wouldn't listen to Ricketts at first, and I own that's where we fell down. It was an hour before we felt that we wanted to interview that doctor."

"And then he was gone?"

"Yes. We were dead slow; that we must admit."

"You searched his house?"

"We did. We found the battery and connecting wires. There were volts enough in that plate when you laid your hand on it to kill an ordinary man."

"Tell me about the doctor's house. Was nobody found inside?"

"No one. What's more, no one has been near the place since."

"He was not seen to go?"

"Yes. He left in a cab while the excitement was on, and with him went a young man wrapped in a heavy fur coat, and the foreigner, whom we now know to have been his servant. This an officer who was left on guard saw, but he had no authority to arrest the doctor."

Old King Brady groaned.

"The young man was Harry, of course," he said.

"I am very much afraid so."

"Did the young man offer any resistance?"

"None at all. The officer is positive of that."

"What was found in the doctor's house?"

"Well, there is a lot of expensive furniture, and quite a library. All the rooms were not furnished, though. It was like the house next door."

"Every effort has been made to trace the man?"

"Yes, and all have failed."

"How about the cabman?"

"He cannot be found?"

"Was there a number on the vehicle? Was it really a cab?"

"That the officer does not know."

It would have done Old King Brady good to have expressed his sentiments about the police just then, but he refrained.

"Now about the ownership of that property?" he asked.

"Has any attempt been made to find this man Dadmore, as I requested in my letter?"

"Yes. No such person is known at the Carlstadt address."

"Did you apply at the tax office?"

"Yes."

"And the result?"

"The property stands in the name of Phineas Fortescue. We believe this man to be the son of old Dr. Fortescue,

who for many years lived in the old mansion on the next block."

"The old doctor is dead, I am told?"

"Yes; he died about ten years ago."

"And what is the address of this man Fortescue? Surely that ought not to be difficult to find."

"The address at the tax office is care of Tuckerman & Co., the Wall street bankers."

"And what do they have to say?"

"We sent a man there at once. Tuckerman has gone to Europe. No one in the office could give us Mr. Fortescue's address."

"I saw Tuckerman on the day of my accident. When did he sail for Europe?"

"The next day, they claim."

"And he alone is supposed to know Fortescue's address?"

"That's what the head clerk tells us."

"Did you see Wilson & Co., the real estate people?"

"Yes. They say the same. The rents they collect are turned in at Tuckerman's. That is all they know."

"It's a strange piece of business."

"Indeed it is. The chief wanted me to ask you what took you to that house in the first place, Mr. Brady. We don't know that yet, and naturally we are curious to learn."

"It was in relation to the Stevenson disappearance case, upon which we were working."

"We thought as much at headquarters. May I ask if you traced Stevenson to that house?"

"Practically, yes."

"You don't care to give details?"

"I should prefer not to."

"It is your privilege to withhold them, of course."

"Has the house been watched? I mean the doctor's house."

"Both houses have been watched night and day by some of our best plainclothes men. Dr. Welford has only to show himself to be promptly nabbed."

"How well is this doctor known in medical circles?"

"We have inquired into that, too, Mr. Brady. He is not known as a physician, but he is a member of the medical society. He has published several works on the heart, and has done some lecturing before the society. He is highly thought of in his way, but at the same time he is regarded as a very eccentric character. No one in the society pretends to have any intimate acquaintance with him. I talked with one member—a Dr. Gillis—who regards him as quite insane."

This practically ended the conversation.

Shortly afterward the inspector withdrew

It took Old King Brady a week to get over his shock.

During all this time not a word was heard of Harry, nor did Dr. Welford put in an appearance at the house he had so unceremoniously abandoned.

Taken all in all, Old King Brady found himself dealing with about as deep a mystery as had ever come his way.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRANGE EXPERIENCES OF HARRY.

It is high time we looked up Harry.

The boy was passing through a most peculiar experience while Old King Brady lay in the hospital.

Briefly let us detail what happened until Young King Brady fully regained consciousness.

As the old detective surmised, Harry opened the prussic acid drawer.

He caught the odor of bitter almonds on the instant, and guessed what he was up against.

Bang shut went the drawer in a hurry, but he was not quick enough to avoid unpleasant results.

We have seen how quick he went down.

As to what happened immediately after that he had no recollection when he came to himself, lying on a bed in a small and comfortably furnished room.

Beside him stood the man whom Old King Brady and the police knew as Dr. Welford.

He held a bottle and a graduated glass in his hand.

From the bitter taste in his mouth Harry thought that he must have been swallowing some of the contents of the bottle, and probably he was right.

His mind was in a dazed condition; still, memory of what had happened remained.

"Are you the doctor?" he gasped.

"I am the doctor," was the reply.

The voice seemed to come from a distance.

The man's eyes were fixed steadily upon him.

In his normal condition Young King Brady would have known that an attempt was being made to hypnotize him, but he did not realize it then.

"Did old King Brady call you to attend me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Am I going to die?"

"You are not."

"I inhaled prussic acid, didn't I?"

"You did ; but you are to let your mind rest easy. You are in no danger at all."

"Send for Old King Brady. I want to see him."

"All right."

Dr. Welford was miles away by this time.

So was Harry a second later.

The next he knew he was lying upon a settee in what appeared to be the cabin of a yacht.

Outside he could hear the lapping of water and the sound of the engine working also reached his ears.

The cabin was elaborately furnished, but it was small.

Seated beside a table was a man Harry could not at first remember to have ever seen.

He was a tall, light haired man of middle age, dressed in the top-notch of fashion.

He sat by the table reading letters.

For some moments Young King Brady watched him.

"Disguised," he thought. "That's a wig. That shrimpy little mustache is false, too. His eyebrows have been colored to match."

"But even then he did not know him until the eyes were raised and turned toward him.

It is pretty hard to disguise one's eyes.

"The same man I saw before," thought Harry.

He recognized the voice, too, although there was a very clever attempt made to disguise it.

Dr. Welford's voice—Harry did not know that name, let it be remembered—was deep and sonorous.

This voice was pitched in a higher key, and there was a metallic ring to it.

"So you have come back to this world, young man!" was the first remark.

"Here I am," replied Young King Brady quietly.

A strange weakness was upon him, a weakness of mind, as well as of body.

He turned his head slightly away.

He knew that he had been hypnotized. It hurt him to look at his man.

"Are you comfortable?" was asked.

"Quite comfortable, considering the circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"Probably you know as well as I."

"Probably I do. Are you hungry or thirsty? Do you want anything to eat or drink?"

"No."

"What you most desire under the present conditions is to know who I am and where you are. Is it not so?"

"It is so."

"I can tell you in part. My name is Dr. Phineas Fortescue."

Harry took a side-long look at him.

Memory was creeping back.

"So I'm in the clutches of the mysterious Dr. Fortescue," he thought. "Small chance for me. I'm likely to solve the mystery of the Stevenson and Yardley disappearance."

"I daresay you have heard of me?" continued the doctor, as we may again call the man.

"Yes."

"You are Young King Brady, the detective."

"Well!"

"The junior partner of that famous firm of meddlers and spies."

"Well!"

"Take it easy. Don't get excited. Now you want to know where you are."

"It rests with you whether I find out or not. I dare say I am entirely in your power."

"You certainly are. You are as much in my power as many another young man has been, and none ever escaped me. At present you are on my private yacht. We are steaming up the Hudson. You are on your way to visit my country home."

Harry was silent.

"In your own mind you are asking yourself why I have captured you," continued the doctor. "You are afraid to speak out, therefore I must speak for you. Is it not so?"

"Have it so."

"The reason should be plain to you. In connection with your partner you undertook to meddle with my private affairs. There could be but one result."

"Which is?"

"That you should contribute to my thirst for knowledge. I propose to drink you up, so to speak."

The little eyes blazed viciously.

The light in them was hardly the light of insanity, however.

It was more that of intense egotism.

They were cruel eyes, though.

They reminded Harry of the eyes of a wildcat he had once seen in a menagerie.

He shuddered and again turned his head away.

It seemed to him as if Dr. Fortescue was about to spring at his throat and tear him with his teeth.

A horrible fear of the man seized him.

Perhaps the doctor read his thoughts.

He arose, and coming over to the settee, stood facing him.

"Raise your head and look at me!" he ordered.

Harry obeyed.

He seemed absolutely without the power to refuse.

Then his former sensations returned.

The doctor seemed miles away, and retreating further into the distance every instant.

He raised his hands and made a few quick passes before Young King Brady's face.

"Sleep!" he said sternly. "Sleep! But let it not be the sleep of unconsciousness. Dream what is passing, that your mind may be prepared."

Prepared for what?

Harry asked himself the question, and then sank away into oblivion.

But the dreams came to him in due time.

He dreamed, and he knew he was dreaming.

Yet, try as he would, he could not bring himself into the waking state.

The first he knew was when the yacht stopped.

He heard men shouting.

He knew that they were making a landing.

"How do you do, Mr. Tuckerman!" he heard somebody say.

Tuckerman!

Where had he heard the name before?

He tried to remember and lost himself.

Then, as in dreams, the scene was all changed.

A young man was raising him up.

He looked like a mulatto. He was tall, slender, and had long straight black hair.

He looked also like an Indian.

The man helped him adjust his dress, and then to put

on a long fur coat and a hat which was certainly not his own.

They went on deck together, and there was Dr. Fortescue.

The doctor spoke to him pleasantly, and Harry answered.

He followed him onto a little pier, where a handsome carriage stood waiting.

The driver was the very duplicate of Harry's former conductor. He sat holding the reins and when Harry had entered and Dr. Fortescue followed him the door was closed and the carriage started up a hilly road.

Now a singular condition of mind came to Young King Brady.

He knew that he was in the carriage, and yet he appeared to be able to see all his surroundings outside.

It was early morning, and a light snow was falling.

In the distance were mountains looking bare and bleak.

Now and then they passed a farm-house, and twice they swept through villages.

Harry could see the people eyeing the carriage curiously.

Soon they were right in among the mountains, and their way led through thick woods.

They went up one hill and down another.

It seemed to Harry that they must have covered many miles when at last they struck a winding road which led them almost to the top of one of the mountains.

Here the carriage, suddenly emerging from the woods, drew up in front of a large mansion of gray stone, which stood perched on the very edge of a cliff, the descent of which was more than a thousand feet.

The driver jumped down and opened the door.

Dr. Fortescue stepped out and beckoned to Harry, who immediately followed him.

"This way, my dear sir," said the doctor. "You have now reached my home. Enter freely, serve me freely, and leave me freely when the time comes for you to go. Now sleep!"

These words were not spoken aloud, but rather hissed in Young King Brady's ear.

The moment the word "sleep" was uttered Harry ceased to dream.

Nothing of what next occurred remained in his memory when he awoke.

The sun was shining in through a window which Young King Brady at once observed was heavily barred.

The room was a small one, but neatly furnished.

Spread out upon a comfortable lounge Harry perceived his own clothes. He was lying undressed in bed.

All weakness and pain had now left him. His condition was in every way normal.

He recalled his dreams with a sinking heart.

"I've been carried away up in the country somewhere," he thought. "Chances are I'm in some lunatic asylum. The Governor will have his own troubles before he finds me, if he ever does find me."

He lay for a while listening to voices which appeared to come from behind the door.

"There is one comfort," he thought. "Whatever road Stevenson and Yardley traveled I am going to travel the same. That's sure. I shall have the satisfaction of solving our mystery, at all events."

It was soon after this that he made up his mind to get up and dress.

He made a careful toilette before trying the door.

He felt sure that he was a prisoner, and yet there was just the chance to the contrary. He could not bring himself to try the door.

After several attempts Harry mustered up the strength to shake these feelings off.

Seizing the knob, he flung the door open, for it was not locked.

He found himself looking into a handsomely furnished sitting-room, where at a table sat two young men engaged in a game of chess.

Both instantly stopped playing, and looked up curiously at Young King Brady.

"It's the detective," he heard one whisper to the other.

They were not particularly attractive-looking fellows, and their faces were excessively pale.

Both appeared to be Englishmen, and as he looked them over Harry had not a doubt as to who they were.

He walked boldly up to the table and saluted them.

"Gentlemen, how are you?" he said. "If I am not mistaken I have the pleasure of addressing Messrs. Stevenson and Yardley. Is it so?"

The two men looked meaningfully at each other.

"And you, I take it, are Young King Brady, the detective," replied one. "Is that so?"

"It is."

"You unfortunate fellow! I am sorry for you!" replied the man. "You had better died than to have come to this horrible house."

CHAPTER VII.

PUTTING IT UP TO TUCKERMAN.

The first thing Old King Brady did after getting out of the hospital was to call at Consul Walsh's office.

He had sent word that he was sick, and asked that the consul come to the hospital, but no attention had been paid to the message.

This he wondered at, but it was soon explained.

Consul Walsh had been recalled to England, and another had taken his place.

Old King Brady next went to Dr. Welford's house, and spent an hour and over examining it.

The iron door attracted his attention first of all, of course.

It was built in the wall between the two houses.

Actually it was a double door.

A thin iron plate had been fitted on each side of the wall, standing flush.

Between these plates, which were both concealed by pieces of furniture, was a nest of wires, consisting of two main wires and hundreds of short pieces, which were so arranged as to touch the plates on both sides.

The battery was in a closet in the Welford house.

By pulling one handle the wires and plate in the "haunted" house could be charged.

Another handle performed the same duty on the Welford side.

The door worked on a reversible hinge, and would open on whichever side a spring was pressed.

Of course, it was now perfectly evident that Dr. Welford ran both houses, and was responsible for the crimes committed in the supposed-to-be deserted house.

But how to find the doctor was a problem.

He seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth.

Old King Brady just finished his examination of the door when Inspector Conright, who had been warned of his presence by the officer in charge of the house, who had telephoned to headquarters, came bustling in.

"Brady, I am delighted to see you around again?" he exclaimed. "You are looking as well as ever. Upon my word, you are certainly a hard man to kill."

"I certainly have no intention of dying before my time," replied Old King Brady.

He was glad and sorry to see the inspector.

Glad because it saved him a visit to headquarters, sorry because he would have much preferred to have continued his examination in the Welford house alone.

"Anything new in the case?" he asked. "I'm just taking hold again to-day. I want to be posted up to date."

"Nothing," replied the inspector. "No word from Harry, I suppose?"

"None."

"I suppose you have prepared your mind for the worst?"

"Why, do you know anything?" demanded Old King Brady quickly.

"Oh, no; nothing at all," replied the inspector. "I only spoke on general principles."

"Then on general principles my mind is prepared. Let us get our heads together. Have you taken steps to find out definitely if Mr. Tuckerman the banker has sailed for Europe?"

"I have done nothing further."

"Then I have. I hired Detective Sharretts, who sometimes works with me, to look up the matter."

"And what is the result? I see you know something."

"I now know this much: Mr. Tuckerman's name is not on the sailing list of any steamer."

"So?"

"Furthermore, he has visited his house since you were told he went abroad."

"This is important."

"You sent to his house to inquire about him, I suppose?"

"I did more than that, Brady. I went there myself. I don't want you to feel that I have been neglectful of your interests."

"I don't feel so. You found out that Tuckerman was another peculiar character, I suppose?"

"Well, I can't say that I did."

"Then take no offence when I tell you that Sharretts was more successful."

"So? What did he learn?"

"That the big house on 48th street, just off Fifth avenue, in which Tuckerman lives, is seldom occupied by him. It is true that he keeps a corps of servants there, and the house is always held in readiness for him, but it is equally true that he very seldom comes there."

"Is that so?"

"It is. Sharretts got next to one of the kitchen maids. She told him positively that Tuckerman paid a hurried call at the house night before last."

"It begins to look suspicious, Brady."

"Don't it? Moreover Tuckerman is said to be a highly eccentric character. He is supposed to be a childless widower, and has lived alone for years when he is at home, which is very seldom."

"I'm intensely interested. Go on; I see by your face that you have something else up your sleeve."

"Well, yes; it is just this. When I interviewed Dr. Welford that night it seemed to me that there was something familiar about his face, but at the time I could not place him. Since then, however, while I have been lying in the hospital I have been able to do so."

"And he resembles Tuckerman?"

"Just so."

"Did he look to you like a man disguised?"

"The light was poor, but it did not seem to me that he was. Tuckerman himself looked more that way when I saw him at the bank. I am positive he wore a wig."

"I'll have the bank shadowed."

"I wish you would, and the house also."

"Shall I arrest him?"

"I should prefer to have him shadowed if you can put good men on the job."

"The very best shall be put on it."

"Another discovery Sharretts made is that the Tuckerman house also belongs to this man Fortescue."

"Still more important. Tuckerman ought to be arrested."

"Very well. I shall not object. But now, Conright, let us get down to business. My partner was taken away from here in a cab. You can't find the cab. I'm going to try my hand."

"You'll find it a long, tedious job, then. We have exhausted every effort."

"That cab was just as certainly telephoned for, and there is a telephone in this house."

"Brady, write me down an ass. I never thought of that."

"We will get right around to the central station and make them tell——"

"No, we won't. At least not yet. Let us go downstairs and consult the telephone book."

They descended to the extension room on the parlor floor, where the telephone was, and Old King Brady proceeded to run through the pages of the telephone book devoted to New York city.

"Almost every one who don't keep a special number list marks the numbers of constant calls in the book," he said. "Let us see if this man has not followed the general rule. Sharp as he is, we may catch him napping on this minor point. It is just such little things, inspector, which give us our clues. Ah, what have we here?"

Old King Brady pointed to a number marked with a lead pencil cross.

"Tuckerman's bank, by thunder!" the inspector cried.

"Yes, and here is Tuckerman's residence right underneath, similarly marked."

"It's so! Go on, Brady. Go on!"

Old King Brady continued to run through the list.

Away down among the R's he came upon another marked name.

"Here we have Reiboldt's saloon on Battery Place," he said. "Why in the world should Dr. Welford want to call up those people? It must be investigated."

"We are getting on. Go ahead."

"And here we have the livery stable, Smith & Co., Amsterdam Avenue. I think, Conright, that we can call our cab."

"We had better go there. The papers have been full of this business. If we call them up we may never see our man."

"All right, then. We will start at once."

It was but a short walk to the livery stable.

The inspector introduced himself, but for Old King Brady no introduction was necessary. Smith, the stable-keeper, evidently recognized him at a glance.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Something wrong with Dr. Welford? Why, I have been serving him with cabs for the last three years."

"My friend, haven't you read the papers?" asked Old King Brady. "Surely you must have seen that there have been things doing at Dr. Welford's house?"

"I have no time to read the papers," replied the stable-keeper. "It's as much as I can do to attend to my business. I haven't heard anything at all. I have been wondering why the doctor hasn't called me up during the last couple of weeks."

Old King Brady, ignoring this manifestly false profession of ignorance, brought matters to a head at once.

Naming the day and hour upon which Harry was believed to have been taken away, he demanded to see the driver of the cab.

"Yes, and let him be brought here quick!" exclaimed the inspector. "This pleading the baby act won't do. My man were here inquiring about this business."

"If so I never heard of it," protested Smith.

Mr. Conright would have gone further, but Old King Brady checked him.

"What we want is to talk to the driver," he said. "It means your arrest if he isn't produced at once."

Smith, red with anger, opened a door, and called into a room where several men were sitting:

"Burns, come here."

Then, as the man entered, he put the question whether he had gone with a cab to Dr. Welford's on that particular night.

Burns responded with a readiness which showed Old King Brady that he had been long before instructed to talk out in case he was cornered.

"Let me see, boss," he said. "I tink I did. Yes, I'm sure I did."

"He's your man," said the stable-keeper, seating himself at his desk.

"Who did you take away from the doctor's house that night, Burns?" Old King Brady asked.

"Sure, it was the doctor himself, and his servant—Louis, they call him—and another feller."

"What did this other fellow look like?"

"Sure, he was a young feller."

"He wore a big fur coat?"

"He did."

"And where did you take them to?"

"Where I always take the doctor and his friends; down to the foot of the street, so he can go aboard his yacht."

The inspector and Old King Brady looked at each other. "I think that is all," the latter said.

"You hold yourself in readiness to bear witness to this, you two men," growled the inspector. "Otherwise, you will not only lose your cab license, but you will find yourselves behind the bars."

"Brady, you are a wonderful man!" exclaimed Mr. Conright, when they went out on the street.

"Oh, no; only an experienced one," replied Old King Brady.

"But why didn't you ask the driver the name of the yacht? I didn't like to butt in, but——"

"It wasn't at all necessary. Chances are he didn't know, or knowing would have lied about it. The name can be easily ascertained."

They were passing a drug store where the blue sign showed that here was a telephone station.

Old King Brady called up Reiboldt's saloon on Battery Place.

"Dr. Welford wants his yacht to call for him at the foot of West 8—th street at one o'clock!" he called.

The inspector chuckled.

Of course, he could not hear the answer, but Old King Brady's end of the conversation ran thus:

"What's that? Don't know Dr. Welford. His name not known in your place? Wait. Hold the wire. I'm doing this for another party. Perhaps I've got the wrong name."

Then in a moment he continued:

"Yes; I was wrong. The name is Tuckerman.

"Oh!

"All right.

"All right; good-by."

"Well?" demanded the inspector.

"In that saloon," said Old King Brady, "there hang out several young fellows who signal the yachts which lie off the Battery when their owners wish to send messages abroad. They work a system of flags, and boats are sent ashore to get the messages. As soon as I heard that the doctor left town on a yacht I knew why the Reiboldt call was marked in the telephone book."

"And what did you learn?"

"That Dr. Welford is not known among this yacht signaling fraternity."

"And Tuckerman is?"

"You heard."

"What is the name of the Tuckerman yacht?"

"The Montserrat, and now to the foot of our street, Mr. Inspector, to ascertain whether such a yacht has been in the habit of making a landing there."

CHAPTER VIII.

HARRY SEES THE PIT OF DEATH.

Young King Brady dropped into a vacant chair.

"I am here, gentlemen, but not because I came here voluntarily, you may be very sure," he said.

"Oh, we can imagine that," replied the speaker. We knew you were here. It is as you say. I am Jack Stevenson, and this gentleman is the Hon. Lionel Yardley. We know that it was through trying to find us that you have got into this fix."

"You are prisoners here, then?"

"We are; and so are you."

"I can believe it. Where is this place?"

"We neither of us know," broke in Yardley. "This is an infernal outrage. If I ever escape I shall at once inform the Home Office. It is outrageous that a peer of the realm should be so maltreated. This man is a——"

"He broke in Stevenson, putting his finger to his lips. "Be careful, my lord. You know as well as I that the walls have ears!"

"We are being spied upon, then?" asked Harry, in a low voice.

"There can be no doubt about it."

"How did you know who I was and what I had been doing in your case?"

"Oh, Dr. Fortescue told us all about it himself. We saw you brought in."

"I was hypnotized?"

"You certainly were—very much so. Never mind. My lady loves company. We have all been there."

"What does it all mean?"

"It's an infernal outrage!" said Yardley again. "I shall look to the President of the United States for relief. You ask what this man is, I will tell you plainly; you have been trapped by a fiend."

"Go on, my lord, and get yourself into more trouble. I wash my hands of it," said Jack Stevenson, getting up and beginning to pace the room.

"Ah, just as I thought," he muttered, when a second later a little panel over in one corner high up from the floor was raised, and a face peered in.

Was this Dr. Fortescue?

The face did not look like his to Harry at first glance.

It was a man with a shiny bald head, a prominent nose, and as hard a looking mouth as he could imagine in the possession of any man.

But the eyes told the story.

There was no chance for a misunderstanding once Harry saw them.

It was the man who had proclaimed himself Dr. Fortescue on the yacht.

Had Old King Brady seen the face just as it was he would have recognized Dr. Welford at a glance.

"Trapped by a fiend!" cried the well-remembered voice. "Very good, my lord! Quite a title for a detective thriller. Certainly you are entitled to redress. Would it not be well to place your protest against the treatment you've received in my hands? I shall make it my business to see that it reaches the President of these United States; or is it the Home Office petition you wish forwarded first?"

Sir Lionel merely glared.

He attempted no reply.

"Trapped by a fiend," continued Dr. Fortescue. "I appreciate the title. Our new guest, the little detective, may as well be initiated now as at any other time. You two need to have your memories brushed up a bit, therefore you shall accompany him. You shall all make a pilgrimage to the pit of death!"

The face was suddenly withdrawn.

A snapping sound announced the closing of the panel. The three prisoners sat looking at each other.

Harry could see written on the faces of Stevenson and Yardley an expression of the deepest despair.

Harry beckoned to Stevenson, and went over by the barred window.

Here he found himself looking out over an immense stretch of hilly country.

He knew that the precipice must lie beneath that window, if what he remembered of the journey seen in his "dream" was really true.

Not a house could be seen anywhere.

They seemed to be in a dense wilderness.

Stevenson came over and joined him.

"You are going to ask me questions," he said.

"I am," replied Harry.

"I doubt very much if I can answer them to your satisfaction then."

"Have we time to talk? Is this pilgrimage to the pit of death to be now or later on?"

"I can't tell you. At any minute the Jackson Whites may come."

"Jackson Whites!"

"Yes, Mulattos, I mean. You will understand soon enough."

"Wait! Perhaps I already understand better than you do. Do you know where we are?"

"Brady, I haven't the most remote idea."

"Then I have, and the mention of the name Jackson Whites has given me the clew."

"What do you mean?"

"That this name, originally applied to a seedling potato away back in the time when Andrew Jackson was President, is now applied to a peculiar race of mountaineers, part colored, part Indian, and part white, who are only to be found among the Ramapo mountains. It is among those mountains that we are now."

"And where are these Ramapo mountains?"

"Partly in New York, and partly in New Jersey. We are certainly in New York. I was brought up the Hudson river in a yacht. That is how I know."

"It is something to know that, but I fear it will do us no good."

"Tell me, what is the object of this man in holding us prisoners here?"

Stevenson's face assumed a frightened look.

"For heaven sake don't ask me!" he said. "To tell you may mean death. This place is a perfect whispering gallery. You saw what happened just now. Heaven knows you will find out soon enough."

"I must find out all I can as soon as possible. If you can't answer one question you can another, perhaps. How came you to be entrapped by this man?"

"I dare not talk, Brady."

"You can say yes or no. Were you enticed to a house on 8—th street, where Italians live?"

"Yes."

"And there directed to a house on the next block?"

"Yes. I—but I must not speak."

"There in some way you were made unconscious?"

"Yes, yes."

"You opened a drawer where there was some white stuff, and——"

"Yes; I see you have been through it all."

"Indeed I have. Was Mr. Yardley's experience the same as yours?"

"Practically the same."

"Tell me how did you first come to put yourself in communication with this man? Surely you need not be afraid to answer that simple question."

"I'll answer it anyhow. It was through Tuckerman & Co., the bankers on Wall street. I wanted to buy a ranch. Mr. Tuckerman told me—ha! I knew how it would be!"

Harry had learned a little, and had already observed much.

Among other things he noticed was that there were three doors to the room.

One led into the little bedroom where he had come back to life.

The other two led into similar bedrooms.

There was no other door visible, so Young King Brady was not a bit surprised when a panel suddenly opened in the wainscoted wall.

Six men entered.

At a glance Harry recognized them as the Jackson Whites of the Ramapo mountains.

They were a coffee and cream colored lot, with straight black hair and bulging eyes.

They wore a sort of felt moccasin on their feet, and their coats and trousers were made up of a hodge-podge of old cloth sewed together.

"You will follow us," said one, in a peculiar nasal voice. Each man held a revolver in his hand.

It was no time to talk and raise objections.

"Come!" said Stevenson. "We have to go."

"The new feller comes ahead," said the spokesman, who was shy one eye—the left.

Two of the Jackson Whites stepped into the room, evidently intending to form a rear guard.

Harry passed through the panel, Stevenson and Yardley following.

They walked through a narrow passage and halted at a door.

Here the one-eyed man proceeded to blindfold all three of them.

They were then led into the open and hands seizing hold of them, they were turned around several times.

This done, they proceeded in a straight line about a hundred yards and then halted.

Harry heard a door open, and there were other sounds.

Next they entered some building, and descended a few steps.

Then there was a brief wait, and the handkerchiefs were removed.

Harry's curiosity was intense.

The room in which they stood seemed to be a sort of cellar, but the walls were boarded up.

On one side a low door had been opened, and on either side stood two of the Jackson Whites, with revolvers ready.

A light streamed through the doorway, coming seemingly from underground.

"Look in, you new feller," ordered the one-eyed man. Stevenson and Yardley turned their heads away.

Harry advanced to the door and looked down into a cave or pit.

At the bottom stood one of the men, holding a lighted torch which he waved about.

It was indeed a pit of death!

Scattered about the floor of the cave were dozens of human skulls and hundreds of bones.

There were also several complete human skeletons.

It was a grewsome sight.

Just inside the door was a windlass, and a rope, which ran over it was fastened under the arms of the man in the pit, showing how he got down.

Harry took all this in, but in silence.

"Do we have to look, Gus?" asked Stevenson.

"No, boss; you don't, not unless you want,er," replied the one-eyed man, half-pityingly. "The doctor didn't say you must, and you have both looked in before."

"Do I have to look any longer?" Harry asked.

"No; you've seen enough," was the reply. "Eyes blinded again, please."

They were blindfolded, and conducted back to the room, where they were left to themselves.

"Now you see what we have to expect if we don't obey the doctor," said Stevenson.

Yardly went into one of the little rooms, and threw himself on the bed, face downward.

"No hope! No hope!" Harry heard him moan.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD KING BRADY AND HIS BURGLAR START ON THE TRAIL.

Down at the foot of the street Old King Brady and Inspector Conright learned all about the Tuckerman yacht.

It frequently landed there, so it appeared.

The old detective questioned several parties.

The landings appeared to have been made for the most part at night.

It was further learned that the yacht always went up the river when it left.

This was as far as they could get.

Old King Brady now managed to get rid of the inspector, and he returned to Dr. Welford's house alone.

He wanted to make a thorough examination of everything in it in the hope of finding some clew to the direction in which Harry had been taken.

It was a tedious task.

The old detective opened drawers and closets, and examined the furniture in the most critical way.

He worked over an hour without result, and then was rewarded by finding a bunch of letters in the pocket of an old coat which hung with other old clothes in one of the rooms on the top floor.

Old King Brady dropped into a chair and hastily ran the letters over.

Some were addressed to Thomas Tuckerman, some to Dr. Samuel Welford, others to Dr. Phineas Fortescue.

This alone was a most important discovery.

The Tuckerman letters related to banking business, and were addressed to Wall street.

The Welford letters were addressed to the house, while the Fortescue letters were addressed: "Thiels, Rockland Co., N. Y."

There could be no doubt that one man was figuring under all three names.

The Welford letters were of no importance.

The Fortescue letters—there were three—were all from New York tradesmen, and referred to supplies sent to Thiels.

One was from a wholesale chemist, another from a maker of surgical implements. The third was from a hardware firm.

"I've got the clew at last," thought Old King Brady. "Thank Heaven I now need waste no more time, but can get down to business at once."

The old detective went to his office, arranged his affairs, and took an afternoon train for Haverstraw.

He immediately went down to the riverside and began work in the different saloons.

He was soon successful in finding a man who was both able and willing to give him the information he sought.

This was one Rounds, who kept a small hotel close to the river-bank.

"The yacht Montserrat. Why, yes, she often ties up here," he said. "Mr. Tuckerman's men are mostly good customers of mine."

"Exactly," replied Old King Brady. "I'm looking for a young fellow named Spindler, who has robbed Mr. Tuckerman. I thought perhaps you could give me a steer."

Rounds did just what the detective supposed he would do.

Jumping at the conclusion that Old King Brady was working for Tuckerman, he listened to the description of the mythical Spindler with close attention.

"I don't know that I remember such a man," he said. "When was he here?"

"Let me see," answered Old King Brady. "When was the last time the yacht was up here?"

Rounds named the night of Harry's disappearance.

"That's right," said Old King Brady. "That's the date I got. Let's see; on that night there was a young man with Mr. Tuckerman who wore a fur coat. Or, perhaps you didn't see them when they landed."

But Rounds had seen the landing.

He distinctly remembered the young man with the fur coat.

"They all went up above, as usual, I suppose?" said Old King Brady, waving his hand in a general way.

"Oh, yes; in Dr. Fortescue's carriage," said Rounds. "He always sends it for Mr. Tuckerman when he comes here."

"Just so," said Old King Brady. "Mr. Tuckerman got the idea that Spindler might have wandered up that way looking for work."

"Mebbe he did. I certainly haven't seen any such fellow around Haverstraw."

"I think I will get up there. Can you direct me to Dr. Fortescue's house?"

"It's up in Johnstown."

"Yes? A hard place to get to. You go into the mountains by Thiels, I believe."

"Yes; Thiels Corners."

"You know the doctor? You have been to his house?"

Rounds did not know the doctor. He had never seen his house. Indeed, he did not know exactly where it was.

Old King Brady had made another advance.

He knew all about Johnstown.

This wild region among the Ramapos represents a number of scattered farm-houses spread out over many miles.

In such a place everyone must know Dr. Fortescue, Old King Brady thought.

But knowing the difficulty of getting in and out of Johnstown, and the dense ignorance prevailing there, the old detective made up his mind to take another day for that part of his work.

"If the boy still lives it is not likely that the delay will make any difference," he said to himself. "I need to gather strength before I enter on a Johnstown chase. I shall need help, too."

So Old King Brady went back to New York, having first sent a despatch to a certain address on the East Side of town.

This telegram was to Mr. Billy Ricketts, burglar, and early the next morning that interesting individual turned up at the old house on Washington Square.

Through Old King Brady's influence the burglar had been released from the House of Detention some time before.

"Boss, I'm blame glad to see you back to business again," said Billy. "How do youse feel?"

Old King Brady assured his burglar that his health was now quite restored.

"I've got a journey to take through a pretty wild country," he said, "and I need someone to act with in case I am cornered. I thought I had rather have you than a detective. Can you go?"

"Sure I can," said Billy, "and I guess you've got a little job in my line to be did, too."

Old King Brady could not help smiling at the shrewd fellow.

"Well, it may come to breaking and entering, Billy," he said.

"I tought so. I brung me tools along."

"Let me see them?"

Billy went out to the vestibule and brought in a dirty little grip.

"It's a pretty good layout," said Old King Brady. "Well, probably you had better take them. It's an even chance, though, if you don't have to throw them away."

"Is it about Harry?"

"Yes."

"He has not been found yet?"

"No."

"Chances are he is dead."

"That is possible. I wish to prove it."

Thus Old King Brady did not start alone for Johnstown.

They went to Thiels by train, and here the questioning began again.

Old King Brady found that everyone had heard of Dr. Fortescue, but that no one he could find had ever seen the man.

All agreed upon locating his house away back in the wilds of the Ramapos.

Some had one story to tell, and some another, but every one stated that the house was on top of a mountain, and that one must turn off from the Southfields road.

So Old King Brady and his burglar started to walk.

The distance to Southfields itself was only about fifteen miles, and Old King Brady knew that if he drove in he would be sure to attract attention, to say nothing of having the team on his hands, which might prove to be most inconvenient.

They had soon passed into that wilderness to the north of the Ramapo valley.

It was just rocks and mountains, with dense forest everywhere.

Now and then they would strike a clearing where there was an old farm-house.

Some of these houses were deserted, and the people they saw about those which were not were poverty-stricken in appearance to the last degree.

These people do but little farming, although in many places the land is not so bad.

They support themselves by making baskets and wooden spoons and bowls.

Altogether they are a strange lot, and the strangest part of it is that although they live within forty miles of New York, few city dwellers even know of their existence, and you can find few among them who have ever been in New York.

Old King Brady traveled about five miles before he stopped to inquire his way.

It was now noon, and he pulled up at a basket-maker's house.

Immediately a crowd of dirty, half-dressed children were out staring at him.

Word must have been passed inside that strangers had come, for a slatternly looking woman appeared in the doorway.

"Can you tell me, ma'am, the way to Dr. Fortescue's house?" Old King Brady asked.

The woman stared.

For the moment she did not answer.

The children scattered.

In a twinkling the last one had disappeared.

"Were they frightened at the mention of the doctor's name?" Old King Brady asked himself.

"Did you not hear me, ma'am?" he asked, approaching the woman. "I inquired the way to Dr. Fortescue's."

"It is on the Southfields road," replied the woman, finding her tongue at last.

"Is this the Southfields road?"

"It will take you there."

"Then all we have to do is to follow this road to reach Dr. Fortescue's place?"

"It's off the road."

"Why, my good woman, you just said it was on it."

"You turn into the woods by the white rock."

"Now we are getting at it. Where is this white rock?"

"'Bout a mile."

"You keep right along this road until you come to it?"

"Yas."

"On the right or left hand side of the road?"

"It's on the left."

"I'm very much obliged to you, ma'am."

"What be you goin' there for?" she asked.

"I have business with the doctor."

"You hev, hey! Waal, if you take my advice you won't go."

"Dr. Fortescue is away from home?"

"I dunno whether he is or not."

"What do you mean, then?"

"Say, you're a tramp, hain't you?"

Billy gave a chuckle.

He looked enough like one, for he was very shabby, but for Old King Brady to be so accused seemed a good joke.

To his surprise the old detective replied:

"Well, yes, ma'am. I am tramping it just at present. Why do you ask?"

"He's a terrible man on tramps, so they say."

"So? Then I can't expect to get any help from him."

"Oh, yes; he'll help yer all right. He! he! You'd better not go."

With this the woman drew back and slammed the door.

"What's de matter wid her?" demanded Billy.

"This doctor evidently has a bad name," replied the old detective. "Can we expect anything else?"

"Well, I s'pose not."

"Of course not."

"But what did she mean?"

"Perhaps she meant that tramps have a habit of disappearing there."

"Say, it might be dat."

"Did you notice how the children disappeared at the mere mention of his name?"

"Well, I did. Dey seemed scart like."

"They most certainly did. We have learned something. We may soon learn more."

They pushed on for several miles.

Not a house did they see, nor a trace of the big white rock.

It was now after one o'clock, and Billy was growing hungry.

Old King Brady had brought along something in the

way of lunch in a shabby little hand-bag, which he intended to throw away when through with it.

"We'll stop and eat next good place we find, Billy," he said.

They turned a bend in the road and came suddenly upon a big white granite boulder.

Here the road divided into three.

One, a wood road showing signs of frequent use, led past the boulder, and apparently ascended the mountain on their left.

"This must be de place de woman told us about," said Billy.

"There's the doctor's," replied Old King Brady, pointing.

There, far up on the side of the mountain, perched upon what appeared to be the very edge of an inaccessible precipice, was a large house of peculiar appearance.

Near the roadside on the right was a small hovel, and now an old man appeared in the doorway.

He stood eyeing the strangers curiously.

"Here's a chance for more information," said Old King Brady. "Come, Billy. Let us hear what the old fellow has to say about that house on the hill."

CHAPTER X.

STRANGE DOINGS AT THE DOCTOR'S.

The remainder of that memorable day passed wearily with Young King Brady.

From Stevenson he could draw no further information.

If the Englishman had been loth to talk in the first place he was more so now that he had been haled to the Pit of Death!

Harry gave it up after a few more attempts, and sat down to a game of chess with the man.

As for Lionel Yardley, he went to bed until Gus brought in dinner about one o'clock.

The meal was an abundant one, and very well cooked.

Gus waited on table and took the dishes away.

After dinner Harry slept a while, and then there was more chess.

Toward night Yardley joined them.

He proved an unpleasant companion, for he kept constantly bemoaning his fate.

It seemed to Harry that something was going to happen after supper.

Both young men intimated as much many times.

But as to what it was they would not give the slightest hint.

Supper was served at six o'clock.

Gus waited upon them in silence.

Harry tried to draw him out, but it was not the slightest use.

After supper cigars were brought in, and while they

were smoking Harry again tried every way to draw his companions out.

Giving it up at last, he went into the room and flung himself on the bed, where he dropped off asleep.

How long he lay thus he did not know, but suddenly he was awakened by the man Gus shaking him.

"You want to get out of here," said the Jackson White. "Come!"

Harry sprang to his feet.

"Where are you taking me now?" he demanded.

"I don't talk to you," said Gus. "'Tain't any use, mister. I'm the doctor's man."

When he got into the other room Harry found that his two companions in misery had vanished.

The panel was now open, and Gus led the way through.

"Keep close to me," he said. "Don't think there is any chance of escape. Remember the pit of death."

He led the way to the front of the building.

Here, passing through a carpeted hall, they descended stairs, and passing through a door went still further down.

Here there was a blaze of electric light.

Harry was pushed through a half-open door.

He now found himself in a brilliantly lighted apartment, which bore every resemblance to the dissecting-room of a medical college.

Raised slabs of marble ran down the center of the room, over three of which were strangely constructed lamps throwing light down upon the slab.

Upon two of these slabs lay naked bodies—corpses Harry believed them to be then.

At the sides of the room were various strange objects, the uses of which Young King Brady could only guess at.

There was a long laboratory bench in one corner, a sink with a stream of running water among other things.

Three big X-ray outfits were upon a table in one corner.

Overhead was a running shaft with belting, operated by a small dynamo which made a dismal buzzing noise.

And the presiding genius of all this was Dr. Fortescue.

Clothed in a suit of spotless white, this strange man was bustling about the X-ray machines.

"Ah, good-evening, Mr. Brady," he called out. "Welcome to my workroom. You have got here at last. I trust your experiences may not be altogether unpleasant. I make it as easy for my subjects as I can consistently. I'll be with you in a minute. Meanwhile make yourself quite at home."

Harry made no reply.

He determined to make the most of his opportunity, however.

Walking in between the two occupied slabs, he gazed down upon the bodies.

It was just as he had supposed.

On one was Lionel Yardley, and Jack Stevenson occupied the other.

The third, above which the electric lamp burned, was clearly intended for himself.

The two men lay with closed eyes, and absolutely motionless.

At first Harry thought they were dead, but as he watched he could see the chests of both rise and fall.

"Hypnotized!" he thought. "Either that or drugged. What can this fiend be about? I suppose all this is in the line of what he considers some great life-work."

He determined to take the bull by the horns, so he walked boldly up to the doctor and said:

"May I speak?"

"Certainly," replied the doctor, who was tinkering with a big Crookes tube.

"What are they there for?"

"My subjects?"

"Yes."

"To assuage my thirst for knowledge."

"Do I go there, too?"

"Certainly."

"Hypnotized?"

"Yes."

"What's your particular line?"

The doctor laughed shortly.

"I have many lines, as you put it," he said. "Just at present I am investigating the properties of the living blood, and making a series of comparative tests on the action of the human heart."

"How long do you expect me to remain here and contribute to your knowledge of these subjects?"

The doctor had now fitted his Crookes tube, and he turned to Harry.

"Brady," he said, "we may as well come to an understanding now as any time. Your stay here is certain to be a prolonged one. I cannot tell you when it will end."

"In other words, it will end when you are through using me."

"That's about the size of it."

"And then do I go to contribute to your collection of old bones in that Pit of Death?"

The expression which came over the doctor's face was absolutely fiendish.

"It may," he replied, "or it may not. It certainly will if you make me the slightest trouble. Now listen: Escape is impossible. I am constantly watched by men to whom I pay large sums. If you were to turn on me now you would be instantly shot. If you try to escape the result will be the same. If you ever presume to open your lips, even to your companions, about the doings in this place it will be still the same, and in any of these cases your anatomical structure will go to contribute to my collection of old bones in the Pit of Death."

"It is not a pleasant prospect."

"I will admit that it is not particularly alluring."

"What do I get for all this?"

"The pleasure and satisfaction of contributing to the advance of science."

"Is that all?"

"That is all," said the doctor, turning his fearful eyes full upon Harry.

"All! All! All!" he repeated.

The hypnotizing process had begun.

In vain Harry tried to shake off the doctor's gaze.

"Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!" cried the fiend. "Sleep and dream, and remember your dreams, for this is your initiatory night."

He then made a few quick passes, and poor Harry was gone.

Still he was not unconscious.

As one is alert in dreams, so he saw and heard everything which was transpiring now.

"Undress!" ordered the doctor. "I want to study you now."

Young King Brady was as powerless to refuse as if he had been the veriest slave of this singular man.

He stripped and then the doctor put him through a brief examination, listening to his lungs and heart.

Not a word was spoken except to order Harry's movements.

As for Young King Brady himself, he was quite powerless to speak.

Now the doctor brought the X-ray machine to bear upon Yardley.

Harry watched without understanding what it was all about.

Time may have slipped by—probably did.

It might have been minutes, or it might have been hours for all he could tell.

Suddenly the doctor turned on him and waved his hand.

Then everything was obliterated in an instant.

The next Harry knew he lay on the slab next to Yardley, and the X-Ray machine was over him.

Whatever it might have been in his normal condition, the sensation of heat now was not unpleasant.

This state of things lasted for an indefinite time.

Now Harry's dreams took another form.

He was still on the slab. The X-Ray machine was gone; over him stood Dr. Fortescue with a glistening lancet in his hand.

"He means to kill me," thought Harry in his dream. Yet he did not care.

It seemed almost a pleasure to die in the service of this man.

He knew when the doctor with the lancet opened a vein in his arm.

Although as he lay he could not possibly have seen it, yet in some mysterious way he did see the blood spurting up, and the doctor catching it in a strangely shaped glass tube of great length.

This was the last.

A strange languor crept over the boy, and the next he knew he awoke to find himself lying undressed in bed in the little room.

Stevenson stood over him, fully dressed.

"You may as well get up and eat," he said, "although I

don't suppose you feel very much like it. We are going to have breakfast pretty soon."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" replied Harry. "How strangely I feel! What's this bandage about my arm for?"

"Don't touch it, for heaven sake, unless you want to bleed to death!" cried Stevenson. "Can't you remember what happened? I could on the morning after my first night."

Harry sat up in bed.

He was terribly weak, but his mind seemed abnormally clear all at once.

"Remember!" he cried. "Why, I remember everything! It all came back to me just as you spoke!"

"Well!"

"That fiend bled me! That's what's the matter with my arm, and why I am so weak!"

"That's right! We have both been through the same ordeal. I've had to stand it half a dozen times. He'll bleed us to death some day, and then you know what will happen."

Harry shuddered.

"The Pit of Death!" he gasped.

"Yes. But it's only our bones which go there, Gus says. What he does with the bodies of his victims nobody knows but himself. The bones go into the Pit of Death."

"Did he kill all whose skulls we saw down there? I counted fifty, and there were more still."

"Gus says not. He claims that the cave is an old Indian burial place, and the doctor has only added to its contents from time to time. There is one gone who was here when I first came; a poor, miserable fellow. One of the natives, I believe. He had bled him until he was reduced to a skeleton. That's the way we will go."

Horrible prospect!

Yet Young King Brady had to face it.

Day succeeded day, and no relief came.

Two weeks passed, and still the situation remained unchanged.

Every night but one the three victims were hypnotized and laid upon the slab.

On that exceptional night Harry took it that the doctor must have been away, for they were allowed to remain undisturbed.

But Young King Brady no longer dreamed.

After that first hour he knew nothing of what happened during his trance.

Sometimes he found himself with the bandage about his arm in the morning, and knew by the weakness he felt that he must have been bled.

Again it would be Yardley or Stevenson who found themselves in that condition.

Often neither were so. Clearly the doctor did not pursue the same methods every night.

Occasionally he came to them and talked, but only about himself and his work.

Then for days they would see nothing of him.

More and more hopeless the situation seemed to grow. Harry had now fallen into an inert condition, from which he was unable to arouse himself.

Stevenson was much in the same way, and as for Yardley, he was rapidly losing flesh, and had wasted almost to a shadow.

And with Harry hope had about vanished.

It seemed to him that nothing could save him from the Pit of Death.

CHAPTER XI.

OLD KING BRADY LOCATES HARRY AT LAST.

In picking out the old man who had come out of the hovel Old King Brady had made a big mistake if he expected to get information.

As he approached the old fellow pressed his finger to his lips and shook his head.

"Say, he's a dummy," said Billy Ricketts.

And so it proved.

Nor was there anyone else in the hut to whom they could apply.

They had penetrated into the wildest part of this wild region, and it began to look as if as far as information went they would have to pick it up for themselves.

The old man watched them while they talked.

Then, as they were about to turn away, he called them back by that animal-like sound such as the dumb sometimes make.

Old King Brady faced him, looking straight into the old fellow's eyes.

Pointing at the big house on the mountain side, the old man pointed then at him.

Old King Brady nodded.

The dumb man threw up his hands with a despairing gesture, and shook his head many times.

"He's a-warnin' you against it, boss," said Billy.

"Evidently," replied the old detective.

"What are you going to do?"

"Going ahead, of course."

"I didn't mean that. About this old feller. Perhaps he can write what he wants to say."

"It is very doubtful. Still we can try it."

Old King Brady produced his note-book and a pencil, extending them toward the old man.

But the dummy only shook his head and then pushing past Billy and the detective he started up the road which led past the white rock.

"Shall I stop him?" cried Billy. "He is going to warn that there doctor that we are coming, all right."

"No; let him go," was the reply. "We will eat our lunch and then push on."

"They rested for over half an hour, but still the old man did not return.

They then started up the road.

It wound up the hill, keeping in the woods all the way.

"It looks as if we weren't never going to get to the end of it," growled Billy. "Say, don't you smell smoke?"

"Yes; charcoal smoke. I suspect there are charcoal burners operating around here."

They pushed on and a few minutes later came to a clearing where an acre or so had been fenced off from the surrounding property.

In the midst of the clearing stood a hut and a charcoal furnace.

"We will try our luck here," said Old King Brady.

He was about to turn aside when a young woman, plainly dressed and bare-headed, emerged from the hut and ran swiftly toward them.

"Hey!" she cried. "Hey, mister! Stop! I want to speak to you!"

Old King Brady halted.

"Let me do the talking, Billy," he said. "Don't you butt in now."

The girl came up all out of breath.

"Say, be you Old King Brady the detective?" she gasped.

"Heavens! Has my fame even penetrated into these wilds?" thought the old detective, as he acknowledged his identity.

"I knowed it was you!" said the girl. "I'm Sis Conklin. I knowed you'd come some day. I dreamed three nights runnin' that you came and helped me find poor Jake. Besides, grandpop seen you. He tole me you was coming. He's the dumb man you met down below."

"And I'm very glad to meet you here, miss," said Old King Brady. "As for helping you, I'll do it if I can."

"I know you will. I heard about you from Sam Tut-hill, who lives in New York. You know Sam?"

"I haven't that pleasure."

"But he lives in New York. So do you, don't you?"

"A great many people live in New York. It would be impossible for me to know them all. Tell me about Jake. Is he your husband?"

"My brother. He's lost now goin' on three months. I shan't never see him again."

"Perhaps you may. I'm going to help you, you know. What happened to Jake?"

"I don't know. He went out a-huntin', and never came back. Grandpop an' I think that Dr. Fortescue must have got him."

"Now you are talking. I am here to find out about Dr. Fortescue. He lives in that big house on the hill?"

"Yes. He didn't build it, though. He bought it five years ago from Mr. Johnson's widder. He's a terrible man, they say."

"I don't know just, but this I do know. Mr. Brady. People go there, but they never come away—that's so. I've seen them go up that there road myself, but I never seen one come down again. It's always the doctor alone, or with one of his blame Jackson Whites."

"The doctor lives alone there?"

"With his Jackson Whites."

"How many?"

"There's six. They are terrible people. He brung 'em here from over in Jersey somewheres. Do you believe it can be true that he cuts men up? They say so. Poor Jake! I'll bet he got him. I dunno what to do?"

"Why haven't you reported all this to the sheriff or someone?"

"I hev. So's others. Nobody won't listen to us charcoal burners. The doctor is rich. He pays big taxes. He makes 'em believe that our talk it all nonsense."

"I understand. Well, miss, I'll tell you that we are here for no other purpose than to investigate this doctor—and I shall be very glad of your help. Is there no man about the place who can go with us, and——"

"No one but me. Jake and me lived here alone. Dad's dead these five years, and mam died last spring."

"You own this land?"

"The part that's fenced off—yes."

"Then you belong to the old Conklin family who once owned so much land hereabouts."

"Yes. Grandpop owned hundreds of acres, but the rich folks got it all away from him bit by bit. No, sir, there hain't nobody here to guide you only me, and I'll do it. But I won't go only in sight of the house. Will you go in?"

"Indeed I will. Tell me, did you see a young man wearing a fur coat taken up here one night about two weeks ago?"

"Yes, I did. I hain't never sence."

"Will you go with me now?"

"Yes; right now."

"Get your hat and come along then."

"I hain't got no hat. I'll come, though. I'll show you something what will surprise you, mebbe, or mebbe I won't get the chanst."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean people in there lookin' out the winders, who can't get out. I've seen 'em many a time. I never seen Jake, though, and I've looked and looked."

"Did nobody go and ask the doctor about your brother?"

"Nobody wouldn't dare. Grandpop stopped him in the wood and fast him then. He was very sweet. He said he didn't know nothin' about Jake. All the same, I don't believe him. Come along!"

Sis Conklin led the way to the road then, and started up the hill.

They hurried along the road, constantly ascending, until at length a sudden turn brought them to a standstill.

Right ahead was a washout some forty feet deep, and fully thirty across.

On the other side was a substantial draw-bridge made of logs, and operated by means of a windlass and chains.

It stood upright, ready to be let down over the break.

Beyond, on the very edge of a precipice, was a long, low house built of gray stone.

It was only partly completed.

The windows were boarded up everywhere, except in one wing.

Not a soul was visible either about the house or the grounds.

"That's it," said Sis Conklin. "That ar's where Dr. Fortescue lives. Yer can't get over there. The Jackson Whites won't let down the bridge only for them they want to have come in. If yer holler they will come out with guns, and fire at yer. I dunno how you are ever goin' to get in there, Mr. Brady, but they tell me you always do manage to find a way."

"Right," replied Old King Brady, "and we will find a way now. But tell me, sister; you spoke of seeing people at the window. You couldn't do that from where we stand."

"No. If you will come along with me I'll show you where I seen them."

Billy Ricketts was growing nervous. He drew the old detective aside.

"Say, Mr. Brady, I don't like the look of that crib," he said. "You an' me can't never hope to pull off this job alone."

"Don't you fret," replied the old detective. "I have ways of pulling off jobs that you know nothing about. What time is it?"

"'Bout two o'clock."

"It is just two. Come, we will let the girl guide us further on."

"What did you want to know the time for?"

"I'll tell you later. Now, Sis!"

The girl turned aside into the woods, following the line of the break.

"What storm cut this place out?" asked Old King Brady.

"It was cut out by the big rain three years ago last fall," replied Sis. "A pond up in the mountain busted the dam and swept everything away. That was the time."

"Are you going to take us across?"

"I am going to show you where you can get across if you want to."

"That's good. Lead on."

Old King Brady had struck just what he wanted in Sis Conklin—a good guide.

The girl took them to a point where the break having taken a turn brought them much nearer to the big house.

As they looked out from among the trees the building was not a hundred yards away.

Old King Brady saw that it was the finished wing he was looking at.

The windows were barred in both stories.

Some looked out over the precipice, others over the break.

"There! There!" cried Sis, suddenly, as she pointed toward the windows. "There are men in there behind them bars! They see us! Why are they kept there? Why

don't they come out? My eye-sight is poor. Perhaps one of them is Jake! Oh, Mr. Brady, can you see?"

"Easily," replied Old King Brady, producing his glass.

He turned it upon the mysterious structure and beheld Harry.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered.

"Is it Jake?" cried Sis, clasping her hands.

"You forget that I don't know Jake," said Old King Brady. "Look for yourself."

He showed Sis how to adjust the glass to her eye, and she had her look, mournfully announcing that Jake was not one of the three.

"Harry is making signs to you, boss!" cried Billy.

Old King Brady waved the big white hat, and Harry was seen to wave his hand.

"And now how to get over there, Sis!" the old detective cried.

"I could get down here and up on the other bank," replied the girl. "I don't know whether an old man like you can do it or not."

"I think I can. Yes, I'm sure I can," replied Old King Brady.

"Will you go?"

"I certainly shall."

Again he drew Billy Ricketts aside.

"Now, Billy," he said, "you can see for yourself how the case stands. It doesn't mean instant death to enter that house, and I am going to try it, but I have no notion of being penned in there. To avoid this I have already telegraphed the sheriff of this county for help. I had a hope that you and I would be able to pull off this job alone, but I see that to be impossible, so I shall work it in a different way. At half-past two precisely the sheriff and his posse were to be at a place called Conklin's corners, on the Southfields road, where they were to wait for word from me at least one hour. If they received none, they were to come on and force an entrance to this house. I want them now, and you must take the word to them. Go as fast as possible. Have them come first to the draw-bridge, and if there is no chance to cross there then on to this place. Here is a note which I have already prepared, and which you can hand to the sheriff to prove that you actually represent me. Are you willing to undertake this?"

"Sure I am, Mr. Brady. I am willing to do anything you say," was the prompt reply.

Sis was consulted and informed them that the road on the left, where the ways parted at her grandfather's hut, led to Conklin's Corners, and that it was only a mile beyond.

Billy started off on the run.

Thus does Old King Brady ever figure out his work in advance.

He had received much information from the sheriff concerning Dr. Fortescue's place and the man before he left New York.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

It is not to be supposed that a man like Dr. Fortescue could lead the life he did entirely unobserved by the outside world even in the wilds of Johnstontown.

Old King Brady had figured on this when he first communicated with the Rockland county sheriff.

He learned what he expected to learn, that the man had been talked about for some time.

Further, he learned that while he was from time to time seen at Southfields, taking the train to New York, he was never known to go into the mountains from that station.

At Thiels and Haverstraw, as Old King Brady had proved, Dr. Fortescue was not known except through the goods shipped to him.

But here Banker Tuckerman frequently appeared, and in his own private carriage was driven into the mountains.

The same carriage drove him out to Southfields under another name.

All this Old King Brady had pieced together, and he was now closing in upon this singular man.

The old detective had come upon the scene at the right moment, as it happened.

For forty-eight hours the three prisoners had seen nobody.

Even the ever-present Gus had not put in an appearance.

As a consequence they had become not only seriously alarmed as to their fate, but were almost starved.

Yardley had given up altogether, and had taken to his bed.

But Harry and Jack Stevenson had exhausted every means to discover the secret of the panel, or to break the thing down.

Now they had given up in despair, and such was the situation at the moment Old King Brady, Billy Ricketts, and Sis Conklin appeared at the edge of the woods on the other side of the ravine.

Harry saw them first, and before Old King Brady saw him.

Yardley was called, and the signaling followed.

"It spells escape, boys!" cried Harry, enthusiastically. "Old King Brady never fails."

The words had scarcely been uttered when a loud explosion burst upon them.

The room rocked as if an earthquake had shaken the house.

Crash followed crash.

The whole structure seemed to be tumbling to pieces. Old King Brady and Sis saw from their position what those inside could not see.

A whole section of the wall of the unfinished portion of the house fell, bringing the roof down with it.

Old King Brady thought the whole house was coming down, and his heart sank.

Billy Ricketts was gone by that time, nor did the noise bring him back again. Perhaps he had gone too far to realize what it meant.

The faces vanished from the windows, and no wonder. Yardley, thrown violently to the floor, lay unconscious.

It was the same with Jack Stevenson.

His head struck the table, and he never moved.

The partition where the panel was hidden was twisted out of all shape, and the panel fell into the room.

Young King Brady had his dose, too, but the way of escape seemed open, and although Harry was terribly shaken up by being thrown against the wall, he sprang for the open panel, but only to run up against Gus in the corridor, who seized him by both shoulders.

"Oh, oh, oh!" yelled the Jackson White. "He's blowed up the house! I knowed how it would be! Oh, oh, oh!"

Down went Gus all in a heap.

Not dead!

Only dead drunk!

Harry sized up his condition instantly, and pulled the fellow to his feet.

"Brace up!" he cried. "Show me the way out of this quick, or we shall all go dead!"

It was hopeless!

What little strength Gus had managed to muster had already departed, and down he went again.

* * * * *

In the meantime Old King Brady had climbed down to the ravine, and followed by Sis, who proved herself a better climber than he was, had contrived to get up on the other side.

They made directly for the ruins, and entered at a break in the wall, but instead of finding themselves in the house they came into a broad courtyard around which the building had been erected in the Spanish style.

In the center of this quadrangle was a little ornamented structure like a summer house.

The quadrangle had never been completed. It was not paved, and the ground presented a mass of broken rock.

On the other side part of the building had fallen.

Just beyond these ruins Old King Brady saw an open door, through which smoke was issuing, but not a soul could he discover anywhere about.

"We will make for that door, Sis!" he exclaimed. "We may find them alive in there yet!"

He started across the quadrangle on the run, closely followed by Sis, who was simply afraid to remain behind.

Just as he reached the summer house he saw Harry appear in the doorway.

"Governor!" he shouted. "Quick! Quick!"

At the same instant the ground sank beneath Old King Brady's feet, and down he went amid a mass of broken rock.

The break was not bigger around than the top of a hog-head, but through it Sis fell, too.

But very different was the manner of their landing below.

Old King Brady struck with terrible force, and lay unconscious.

Sis landed on her feet like a cat, and stood shrieking amid a grewsome collection of skeletons, skulls, and old bones.

They had fallen into the Pit of Death!

* * * * *

Once more Young King Brady pulled Gus to his feet, and this time backing him against the wall, managed to hold him there.

"Speak!" he cried. "What is all this? What has happened in this evil house?"

"It's the boss! He's been locked in his laboratory now for two days," replied Gus, thickly. "He told me not to disturb him till he rang the bell."

"Well, he has rang the bell pretty loud now, then! So you improved the opportunity by going on a drunk and letting us starve. Where are the rest of your gang?"

"The boss sent them away. He always does when he locks himself in."

"And you and he are the only ones in the house?"

"Yes."

"Show me the way out! Quick!"

It was time!

The place was rapidly filling with a pungent smoke.

Aided by Harry, Gus got to the end of the corridor and threw open a door on the quadrangle, which aided matters some.

At the same instant a big piece of the wall came tumbling down.

Gus collapsed here, and Harry left him.

As he dashed back to aid his companions in misery he could see a man waving a lighted pine-knot wandering about aimlessly in the smoke.

It was Dr. Fortescue as nearly as Harry could make out, but he was not stopping to lend aid to the fiend who had brought him into this terrible situation.

Reaching the room, Harry dragged Jack Stevenson out into the quadrangle, and returning still again did the same for Yardley.

Both were still unconscious, and were evidently suffering from concussion of the brain.

Neither in coming nor going did Young King Brady see anything of Dr. Fortescue.

The smoke still came pouring through the corridors, but there was no flame, nor any sign of that spectral figure with the torch.

It was just as he raised up after dropping Yardley on the flagging in front of the door that Harry saw Old King Brady.

Saw him only to have his partner and his companion vanish before his eyes.

Young King Brady dashed to the little building in the

quadrangle just beyond which Old King Brady had so strangely disappeared.

At the point of Old King Brady's disappearance two great masses had fallen together, completely concealing the pit below.

Indeed, Harry would have found it difficult to believe the plain evidence of his senses if it had not been for the screams of Sis coming up from some mysterious concealment below.

"Governor! Governor!" shouted Harry.

The only answer was continued screaming on the part of Sis.

Bursting into the little building then, Young King Brady found himself on familiar ground.

He was at the entrance to the Pit of Death.

In a moment he had the inner door open, and was looking into the pit.

"Help! Help!" screamed Sis. "Mr. Brady has killed himself! Get me out of this horrid place!"

The rope hung down from the windlass, and without even stopping to test its strength, Harry climbed in through the opening, and seizing it slid down into the pit.

He bent down over Old King Brady.

To his great relief he found that he still breathed.

But before he had time to rise Sis gave a wild yell.

"The rope! The rope!" she screamed.

It had been suddenly jerked up out of the pit.

Looking up, Harry saw the light of the torch come, and he knew what to expect.

There was Dr. Fortescue, dressed in a queer fancy costume, crouching in the opening, with the torch above his head.

"Death! Death! Death!" shouted the fiend, as he waved the torch above the Bradys. "Those are your future friends! They lie all about you! Learn to know them! They were all good fellows once. You are in the Pit of Death!"

He followed this wild speech with a diabolical laugh, and drawing back, vanished.

"It's the doctor! It's the doctor!" moaned Sis. "He will murder us all, just as he did Jake!"

"Hush! Hush!" said Harry. "He is evidently mad! Try and be calm!"

Again Harry bent over the old detective, who was now stirring.

"Is it you, Harry?" he asked faintly, and then, to Young King Brady's great relief, he staggered to his feet.

"What place is this?" he gasped. "What are all these skulls and bones doing here?"

Tough as a knot is the old detective.

He had been merely stunned by his fall, and in a few minutes he was just as chipper as ever.

There was plenty of time for explanations.

An hour passed before they heard a sound.

Then, after the Bradys had gone over the details of this strange story together, shouts were heard, and the tramping of men above.

It was Billy Ricketts and the sheriff come at last.

And with the easily performed rescue of the Bradys and Sis Conklin from the Pit of Death, our story practically ends.

Billy Ricketts met the sheriff at the crossroads, and guided him to the ruined house.

The first thing they saw when they entered the quadrangle was Dr. Fortescue, lying dead near the door, with a knife clutched in his hand.

His face was terribly scarred, and his clothing and body burned in places.

Near him were the two Englishmen, still unconscious.

That the fiend had fallen dead in the very act of stabbing Jack Stevenson there could be no doubt.

After their rescue the Bradys took hold.

Down in the laboratory wreck and ruin was found. Doors were wrenched off their hinges, and everything about the place was broken and bent, while coals from furnace lay scattered about the stone floor, mingled with floor timbers which had fallen from above.

What caused all this ruin was never known, but doubtless it was some chemical experiment which had gone wrong.

Stevenson and Yardley, removed to the hospital at Paterson, N. J., with great difficulty finally recovered.

Gus was not found.

Doubtless the Jackson White braced up in time to take himself off before the intruders came.

Beyond all question the Bradys proved that Tuckerman, Welford, and Fortescue were all the same person—the "fiend."

Fortescue was his real name, and relatives were soon turned up who subsequently divided his large estate, as no will was found.

The man was a mystery, and he died a mystery.

Poor Sis never found her brother.

Harry believes him to have been the "native" who died after Stevenson came to that horrible house.

The two Englishmen hurried home directly after their recovery.

Both liberally rewarded the detectives.

And with this final and most important mention, we close the singular tale of "The Bradys and the Pit of Death."

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND THE BOSTON BROKER; OR, THE MAN WHO WOKE UP WALL STREET," which will be the next number (364) of "Secret Service."

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